天開記

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most generous of
fellow-authors.

James Joyce

30.4.29.

THE CIRCLE OF CHALK

THE CIRCLE OF CHALK

A Play
in Five Acts
adapted from
the Chinese by
KLABUND

English Version
by

JAMES LAVER

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灰闌記

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INTRODUCTION

Alfred Henschke, who used the pseudonym Klabund, was born in the little town of Krossen in Germany, thirty-eight years ago, and died in Switzerland in August, 1928. His father was a chemist, and his early years were spent in comparatively humble surroundings. He was educated at the Friedrichs-Gymnasium at Frankfort-on-Oder, and he was little more than twenty when his first book of poems appeared—poems more like telegrams than any of the conventional forms of versification. Alfred Kerr "discovered" him, and "Pan" gave him his first opportunity, but for many years he lived a life of struggle in Munich and Berlin. Even when his success came he was compelled to begin another kind of struggle, this time against tuberculosis; and he divided his life between the German capital, with its opportunities for work and friendship, and Davos, where he kept up a courageous fight against approaching death.

In appearance Klabund was typically German, with his short hair and spectacles, but instead of the usual plumpness of his race was a terrible emaciation, and in

place of the usual healthy complexion was a deathly pallor. He was a short-sighted, thin-chested invalid, but there was an energy and resolution about him that belied his frail figure and pale face. As George Hermann said, in the obituary notice which he contributed to the *Vossische Zeitung*, Klabund was "a man like a burning bush." His melancholy was habitual—how could it have been otherwise?—but humour kept flashing out. Indeed there were many who considered him a trifler, and overlooked the serious background of even his lightest work.

He was extraordinarily fecund. Verses flowed from his pen; in fact he wrote much that did not enhance his reputation. But the best of his lyrical work is in the true tradition of romantic Lieder, and some of his verses, at least, are assured of a lasting place in the history of German poetry.

In them—the lyrics—the true Klabund lies, and to gain an insight into the ease of his gift and the range of his fancy, it is only necessary to dip into "Morgenrot," "Die Himmelsleuter," "Das Blumenschiff," "Irene," "Heisses Herz," "Dreiklang," and the rest. He wrote novels too—"Moreau," "Mohammed," "Pjotr," none of which has yet been made accessible to the English public. But his immediate success was due to his plays, in particular to "Der Kreidekreis": THE CIRCLE OF CHALK. "Hui-lan-chi, or the History of the Circle of Chalk, is taken from the repertory of the Chinese theatre called Yüan-chü-po-

chêng, i.e. the Hundred Pieces composed under the Yüan, or princes of the family of Jenghiz Khan, who reigned in China from 1259 until 1368. Four Plays of the repertory reached the West in the early part of the nineteenth century, all in French translations. P. Prémare, a missionary in Peking, translated *L' Orphelin de la famille Tchao;* M. Davis, *Le Viellard qui obtient un fils*, and *Les chagrins du palais de Han;* and Stanislas Julien, "*Le Cercle de Craie.*" This last was published in London in 1832, by John Murray, on behalf of the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, and there is little doubt that it was this French version which was unearthed by Klabund, and used as the foundation of his own work.

Klabund, as we have said, was, first and foremost, a lyric poet, and one of the attractions of the old Chinese play, in his eyes, was its mingling of prose and verse. Chinese verse is notoriously difficult, and Julien's translations, although no doubt scholarly, had little fire. Klabund substituted his own lyrics, and, indeed, allowed himself a free hand with the play generally. In so doing he no doubt introduced certain anachronisms and impossibilities which will be obvious enough to those learned in things Chinese.

A consideration of the differences he saw fit to introduce is an interesting commentary on the contrast between East and West. In the original there is no Tong and no Emperor. Hi-tang is a prostitute who is

sought in marriage by Ma; but her mother, who lives upon her earnings, refuses to let her go until she has been indemnified with a hundred ounces of silver. All this happens in the Prologue. In the first act, Mrs. Ma announces that Hi-tang's child is now five years old; she confesses herself the mistress of Chow, and proposes to him the poisoning of Ma. Chow immediately assents. Chang-ling, in whom is no trace of the revolutionary fervour and patriotic sentiments attributed to him by Klabund, returns from his wanderings with the avowed object of begging from his rich brother-in-law. Hi-tang receives him with blows and insults, and (very properly, in Chinese eyes) refuses to give away her husband's property. Mrs. Ma, however, instructs her to give him some robes and a head ornament, and then, on the strength of their loss, accuses Hi-tang, to Ma, of having a lover. Ma beats Hi-tang (there is a great deal of beating in the original), Mrs. Ma puts poison in his soup, Ma dies and is buried without ceremony, and Mrs. Ma accuses Hi-tang of his death.

Klabund kept fairly close to his model in the trial scene, except that the breakfast meditations of the judge are entirely his own, and that he reduced the two mid-wives to one.

In the snow-scene, Hi-tang, conducted by two gendarmes, meets her brother, who has now become an officer of justice, and implores his help. He repulses and strikes her, but her explanations appease him, and

he buys her wine at the inn. Chow and Mrs. Ma enter, and Chow is overheard to remark that he has made arrangements for Hi-tang to be done away with on the road. Chang-ling tries to arrest them, but, warned by the gendarmes, they escape. In the last Act, the characters all appear before a superior court (but not that of the Emperor) and the Governor discovers the truth by a process similar to the Judgment of Solomon. Chang-ling is allowed to leave his employment, and live with his sister, but before he does so, at the joyful insistence of Hi-tang, he takes sword in hand to execute the malefactors—by cutting them into a hundred and twenty pieces.

Klabund was compelled, for Western taste, to make two important modifications in the original play: he had to tone down its ruthlessness, and he had to provide what is called "love-interest." Hence the introduction of the Emperor, and (in Chinese eyes) the entirely immoral part which he is called upon to play. The mere fact of Hi-tang's marrying again would be repugnant to Chinese standards; it was enough, for the original author, that she was vindicated—and revenged. The West has substituted Humanitarianism for Morality, and we, being Westerners, can hardly regret that this change is reflected in Klabund's play.

The play itself remains one of the most attractive products of the German poet's lyrical inspiration, and it is much to be regretted that the fine spirit whose

work it was has flown away so soon from the bodily cage which was too weak to hold it.

Verschliess den Käfig, hüte gut das Haus,
Sonst fliegt der Vogel in den Wald hinaus!

J.L.

London, 1929.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

CHANG-HI-TANG.

MRS. CHANG, her Mother.

CHANG-LING, her brother.

TONG, a Procurer.

PO, a Prince.

MA, a Mandarin.

YU-PI, his Head-Wife.

CHOW, Clerk of the Court.

CHU-CHU, Chief Judge.

A Midwife, two Coolies, Officers of the Court, Policemen, Soldiers, an Inn-keeper, Tea-house Girls, a Poet, a Master of Ceremonies, a Child.

THE CIRCLE OF CHALK

ACT I

SCENE: *The interior of a Tea-house. In the middle background, a black paper screen, from behind which the characters enter. To right and left, black curtains decorated in white with birds, flowers and emblems. When the Curtain rises, music is heard from a gong, a flute, and the instrument Kin (a kind of fiddle).* TONG, *a fat eunuch, the proprietor of the Tea-house, waddles forward from behind the Screen.*

TONG. I have the honour to introduce myself. My despicably low-class name is Tong. It sounds, does it not, as though somebody were striking a gong, slightly out of tune? I am the proprietor *(with a gesture indicating the room)* of this modest, but really first-class establishment. My *savoir-vivre* and good taste, qualities of mine which are generally acknowledged by the most exalted of my customers, forbid me the importunities of extravagant commendation and the vulgarities of self-advertisement. My escutcheon is a simple white line on a black ground. I make no parade when I go abroad, I distribute no alms with a discreet ostentation, and I am on excellent terms with the

police. The Commissioner of Police himself sometimes honours me with a visit. For the rest, only ladies of the best reputation and the finest manners are allowed under my roof. I would not presume to offer to my illustrious *clientèle*, anything but the *crême de la crême*. Do you hear the music? I hope it is not offensive to your honourable ears. I have done my utmost to instruct the ladies who compose my orchestra in the handling of their instruments. They are now playing the Serenade of Spring. Yo blows the flute, Yu plays the violin and Yow strikes the gong.

(*He draws back the Curtain at the back of the stage, and discloses three cages in which sit three beautiful girls playing on musical instruments. A fourth cage is empty. One of the girls sings:*)

To the men Tong's courtyard thronging
I'm a toy that can be bought,
To their lust and to their longing
Yielding all—except my thought.
They give gold, and dainty dishes,
Never yet a friendly word;
While my sweet and secret wishes
Cleave my bosom like a sword.
Yesterday a youth came to me,
One who had not loved in vain,
His kiss was like a dagger through me—
Ah! he never comes again.

TONG. (*Allowing the Curtain to fall back into place*). It is a talent of hers to give this artistic expression to her heavy sorrow. A young lady with her limited practice in rhyme, can naturally not comprehend the great national poets. But it is something if she has learned to express herself a little in the minor elegancies of verse. For, after all, verse-making and love-making correspond to the same fundamental emotion in the soul. . . . Do you know what a gong always reminds me of? Of an execution. You will hardly credit it, but I was, in my youth, an executioner. In those days I made men lose their heads in the physical sense, now I make them lose their heads in the—artistic sense, with the help of my flower-maidens. And so that I shall not myself be tempted to depreciate the value of my wares, and perhaps arouse the jealousy of my honourable *clientèle*, I have, of my own free will, deprived myself of the Attributes of Manhood. I have subjected myself to a little operation, and so remain, as it were, halfway between man and woman, neither of both, and, as one might say, to this middle path in life both called and chosen. My sister goes out at twilight to bring in customers. But I hear footsteps in the street outside.

(*From behind the Screen enter* MRS. CHANG, *and* HI-TANG, *her daughter, both in mourning. The music stops.*)

HI-TANG. My name is Hi-tang. I am the daughter

of this worthy lady, Mrs. Chang. I am sixteen years old, sixteen years—young. I have already suffered much. I shall suffer even more. Much sorrow; a little joy. Red evening clouds after a day of storm and darkness. That is what life is.

TONG. High-born ladies, I am your most unworthy servant. If I may do so without impertinence let me express both my astonishment and my deep sorrow to see such elegant females enter this house of mirth in the raiment of mourning. I must presume that there has been a death among your very next-of-kin, and I permit myself to offer my sincerest condolence. Unfeigned sympathy, however unworthy, pours balm into the wounds of sorrow and despair.

HI-TANG. It is scarcely an hour since we laid in the earth Mr. Chang, by trade a market-gardener and keeper of silkworms, the husband of this lady, and my father. With my own hands I dug the earth for his grave and threw it back again upon his coffin. For we had no money to hire grave-diggers.

*(*MRS. CHANG *sobs.)*

I loved him, and now that he sleeps with his fathers I love him even more deeply, and I will burn incense to his dear memory night and morning. He used to bring me the fruit of his garden on the leaves of flowers. He dreamed that I should one day be raised from our low caste to a higher station in life. Now,

the dream is over; the wedding-cake is broken. The tree of his hope stands bare. The dead leaves rustle on the ground beneath my feet; I, who was like the lizard in the spring, darting merrily among the stems of grass.

TONG. Though the vessel sticks upon a sandbank yet the tide of fortune will raise it and carry it once more to the open sea, who knows how soon? But permit me a further question. How did your honourable father come to die so suddenly? I remember him very well, and saw him only the day before yesterday, carrying melons to market.

MRS. CHANG. The wheel of misfortune has rolled over us. My devoted husband, a man sober, honourable, and diligent in his business, wearying of his miserable life, has cast it off like an old garment——

(HI-TANG *buries her head in her folded arms.*)

TONG. May the Demons of the Underworld be kind to him, and the Lord of Eternal Night pronounce upon him a merciful judgment. May one enquire the reason for this sudden departure to the next world?

HI-TANG. The mandarin and tax-gatherer Ma has driven us out of house and home, and deprived us of all we had. There was a famine and many people were hungry. My father could not pay the

taxes, which fell due the day before yesterday. We had nothing of value but a coffin, in which for many years the head of our family, when he dies, has been carried to burial. Mr. Ma was not ashamed to allow his bailiff to confiscate this coffin. Then my father went to the Mandarin's house and hanged himself upon the door-posts.

TONG. The Mandarin Ma will not find his adventures in gallantry made easier by this your father's death.

MRS. CHANG. The neighbours broke his windows with stones. Oh! may the vengeance of the spirits find him out. Through all his dreams may the hanged man wander, ghastly white, his blue tongue lolling out of his mouth. May foxes and vixens infest his path, and may a wolf drink his blood. May a thousand mosquitoes buzz in his brain, and a thousand wasps sting his eyes and blind him!

TONG. May the Demons of the South protect me!

(*Faint music is heard behind*)

HI-TANG. Where does this beautiful music come from? It sounds as sweetly as if the Goddess of Morning played upon her harp, and with his flute a shepherd gave the answer. Already my sorrows seem lighter, my spirits rise like a butterfly into the air.

TONG. It is the occupants of this house, the daughters of joy, who play these melodies, as simple but as exhilarating as the piping of grasshoppers.

MRS. CHANG. That is really, high-born Mr. Tong, the object of our visit, to desire you to take my daughter Hi-tang, as a daughter of joy, into your honourable and respected house.

TONG. You astonish me! But I must ask to learn more before I can come to a conclusion.

HI-TANG. I am not without accomplishments. I know they are only trifling, but I am sure that under your invaluable instruction they would ripen and bear fruit.

MRS. CHANG. Mr. Tong, we are completely ruined. How can we live? I am compelled to sell my daughter. I need not show her beauty further. Of women, Mr. Tong, you are a connoisseur.

TONG. You flatter and exaggerate, Mrs. Chang.

MRS. CHANG. Mr. Tong, I must sell my prudent, beautiful and modest daughter. And with whom could I leave her more willingly than with you, who hold the highest reputation of any of your profession in the town?

TONG. I am honoured, Mrs. Chang, that you should have thought of me first. The fact is that the extraordinary beauty of your well-bred daughter has not escaped me. I am aware that at the Festival of the Cherry Blossom and at the Feast of Lanterns all the young men flew to circle round her, and there was not one of them that, having seen, did not

carry away in his breast the arrow of dolorous desire.

HI-TANG. I can play the lute, the flute, and the instrument Kin. The game of chess is not unknown to me, and I have studied calligraphy. I know how to paint elegant greeting cards for birthdays and the New Year. I can dance and sing. Shall I dance for you?

MRS. CHANG. Dance, my child, so that Mr. Tong may learn to appreciate your talents.

(HI-TANG *dances a few steps in tune to the hidden music, then sinks gracefully to the floor, where she remains lying.*)

TONG. Exquisite, excellent! A rare gift, a genuine dramatic talent. May I ask what price you are asking for the young lady?

MRS. CHANG. A hundred taels in gold.

TONG. H'm, h'm! That is a very considerable sum, honoured lady, even for such a prosperous establishment as mine. The young lady is beautiful, there is no doubt about that, but if my old eyes do not deceive me, she has on her neck a slight blemish. Young gentlemen set great store by an unblemished neck.

MRS. CHANG. Ninety taels.

TONG. She is indeed most intelligent, and well-

built, and she understands dancing. But her dance was to me, too melancholy. It lacked that nicely poised gaiety that men like.

MRS. CHANG. Mr. Tong—she is still a virgin.

TONG. Still a virgin! Well, shall we say eighty taels? Is the bargain settled.

MRS. CHANG. It is settled.

TONG. (*Getting up and going out.*) I will permit myself to count you out the sum immediately.

CHANG-LING. (*Bursting in.*) I have sought you, my sister, from street to street. The fallen petals of a white chrysanthemum led me here at last. And here I find the flower—leafless.

HI-TANG. The flower that I carry in my girdle has not yet lost a single petal.

CHANG-LING. Before night comes it will be faded.

HI-TANG. My duty as a daughter teaches me to bear my mother's burdens.

CHANG-LING. By their literary studies, some of our ancestors, back to the seventh generation, have attained to the very highest offices.

HI-TANG. Yes! to the office of a market gardener and rearer of silkworms. But this market gardener was a better and a finer man than all the learned and literary, and mandarins of the first class.

CHANG-LING. How is it, mother, that you can endure to see your daughter degrade herself to become a tea-house girl. Is she not also my sister—I, who am qualifying for the rank of doctor?

MRS. CHANG. You are a man. Why do you do so little for your mother and sister, and contribute not a *kesch* to our livelihood?

HI-TANG. Have you forgotten the Code of Manners and Decorum? Did you not learn by heart at school: The Duty of a son is to bear burdens, that winter and summer his elders may enjoy every comfort of life. Every evening shall the son himself make the beds on which they rest; every morning he shall arise at cock-crow and enquire reverently after their health. During the day he shall ask them often if they suffer from cold, or if the heat torments them.

MRS. CHANG. It is the duty of a son to support his mother, and to be her protection and her shield. It is his duty to love her, and those she loves; to honour her and those she honours.

HI-TANG. Sons and daughters shall love only those dogs, and birds, and horses, that their parents love.

MRS. CHANG. So long as the mother lives the son shall not leave the house without her consent.

CHANG-LING. Thank you for your sermon. It amuses me. You know the smallest duties of a son,

and can repeat them by heart as a parrot repeats the voice of her master. But there are yet greater duties for a son to fulfil. Is it not written in the Book of Hi-king: The highest degree of filial love is this: to aspire to the highest dignities, and to shake the coming century with the glory of his name, as the storm shakes the trees?

MRS. CHANG. Perhaps you strive after the highest dignities in the taverns and eating houses where you spend your time. Don't you squander there the couple of *kesch* you earn by copying? Don't you spend it upon women in the lowest tea-houses? You don't think it beneath you to consort with tea-house girls, but when your sister takes up the same profession, you dare to throw mud at her.

HI-TANG. Brother, I will try to work for your living too. Mr. Tong's is a house of very good standing. His guests must be rich and generous.

CHANG-LING. Abandoned wretch! Will you make me your partner in infamy?

(HE *strikes her in the face.*)

MRS. CHANG. If it were me you had struck! I bore you, and so I am guilty of your doings. Oh that I had had no son, and that the stem of my ancestry had never sprouted from the earth!

CHANG-LING. Let this shameful bargain be cancelled.

HI-TANG. The bargain has been honestly concluded—and an honestly given word must be kept honestly. Truth is not double-faced.

MRS. CHANG. Mr. Tong is coming back with the money.

CHANG-LING. I hate you. My name will be laughed at in every alley in the town. I shall fail in my examination, and not even be able to obtain an inferior, local post.

HI-TANG. A bird is still a bird, although its wings are clipped.

TONG. Here is the money, honoured lady.

(*Count it out:* MRS. CHANG *is about to take up the money, but* CHANG-LING *thrusts himself between.*)

CHANG-LING. Eighty taels! Ten for me—and then you're rid of me. I am willing to modify my moral convictions—for a consideration.

HI-TANG. My poor brother! Give him fifteen taels, Mother. The blessed spirit of my father will not forsake me.

(CHANG-LING *helps himself stealthily to twenty taels, and disappears.*)

TONG. A very singular man, your honourable brother! He was so impolite as not once to address

himself to me. But allow me to show you the golden cage in which you shall sit and plume your feathers. This way, please!

(HE *draws the curtain from before the empty fourth cage.* MOTHER *and* DAUGHTER *embrace, and* TONG *bows the* MOTHER *out.*)

HI-TANG. (*In the cage sings*):

Mid willows stands the house upon the shore,
A pretty maid is peeping through the door,
Before the cage there stands a Mandarin,
A pretty linnet hops and sings within.
Shut doors, and guard the cage well night and day,
Else flies the linnet to the woods away!

(PO, *a young Prince, enters the room.* TONG *disappears before him into the corridor with extravagant obeisances.*)

PO. A roving blade am I,
I follow my free will,
I've wandered far and nigh,
Yet sadness dogs me still.

A thousand swords I wield,
When battling with the foe;
I make whole armies yield,
Yet cannot soothe my woe,

I bow the head to no man;
Yet, though my arm is strong,
I'm as weak as any woman,
When I hear a tender song.

I am the Imperial Prince Po. One of the Imperial princes, for there are as many as there are rain-drops on an April day. The Succession is a kind of State Lottery, and chance alone decides who shall be the Son of Heaven, and ascend the Throne of the Dragon. I was led here by the song of a nightingale, singing as free nightingales do not sing. Only caged and blinded nightingales sing so enchantingly. Where is the bird, that I may catch it, and feel its little anguished bird-heart throb in my hands? (*Sees* HI-TANG.) It was a nightingale I heard, yet following its call, it is not a bird I find, but a flower. The scent of the flower intoxicates me, but it is pale with sorrow, and the cup of its petals is closed. Is there no way to revive it and turn its face towards me?

HI-TANG. Are you the sun? Only the sun can draw the flowers towards him.

PO. Oh, I am far from being a sun. I am not even a star, although perhaps I am a star's child, and as my starry mother told me, fallen to earth out of the Milky Way.

HI-TANG. Perhaps you are only a falling star, gleaming upon your narrow golden way for one,

two, three seconds, and then—lost in the darkness, like a rocket that falls into the water at the Spring Festival.

PO. I would forego a whole lifetime of light and glory, to be lost in darkness and in death—with you.

HI-TANG. Young gentlemen learn these pretty compliments from their tutors and professors in the Class of Deportment. They come from the lips only, and do no more than tickle the ear.

PO. What can I do to make you believe me? Let my lips touch your ear. I will breathe something to you that cannot be said with words.

HI-TANG. A breath may grow to a wind, and a wind to a tempest. Think first whether what you think cannot be framed in words.

PO. I think nothing. I feel—everything.

HI-TANG. A feeling is a moth that flies by night. He is difficult to catch next day.

PO. Not with *your* butterfly net, my pretty one.

HI-TANG. Oh! I am no entomologist. I catch no butterflies for my collection. I had rather see them alive, and fluttering in the light and air.

PO. Only a very well-read young lady could speak so well.

HI-TANG. I have read very little.

PO. In books perhaps. But my heart lies bare before you, as if you were the philosopher To-teking. Were you educated by my fat brother, who opened the door for me?

HI-TANG. It was my father who taught me. He wore a peasant's smock, but everybody saluted him.

PO. May I call upon him?

HI-TANG. He is dead.

PO. Allow me to honour his memory by touching the ground three times with my forehead.

HI-TANG. Who are you, that you salute so courteously a man of the lower classes?

PO. I am a young man, that is all I can say. Good for nothing, perhaps, but to eat heartily, sleep long, visit my tailor and play chess.

HI-TANG. Would you care for a game of chess? Here is a board all ready.

(*They sit down and begin a game.*)

HI-TANG. White plays first, then black.

PO. Check to Queen.

HI-TANG. I am no queen. Check to King.

PO. I am no king. Move, counter-move. Thesis, antithesis! You advance boldly, as if you were an accomplished general. I give the game up, but only to begin a better game.

HI-TANG. What game is that?

PO. The game of love.

HI-TANG. The game of love? I did not know love was a game. When my father said: "I love you," his brow was furrowed, and his eyes sparkled. He did not play with me then.

PO. The love of a father is to a lover's love as the love of flowers to the love of creatures of flesh and blood. Flowers, perhaps, love one another as father and daughter love. Lions love one another as man and woman.

HI-TANG. I am not yet a woman, only a girl. Can a lion love a flower? No, no! Be but a vase in which a flower is placed for a few hours only. Shall I recite for you the "Ship of Flowers," by our great lyric poet, Su-Tong-Po?

Beyond the reef where the foam breaks in showers,
Rides, like a cormorant, the Ship of Flowers.
A scent is wafted to me o'er the sea;
I call and wave, no heed is paid to me.
Mimosa hangs in garlands from the side,
A fan keeps time, the plunging oars to guide.
Into the foaming sea a flower I throw,
Which by the waves is carried to and fro.
Maybe, when the wind falls, at close of day,
My flower will float across the vessel's way.

(A moment's silence.)

Can you explain the poem to me?

PO. I am wandering by the sea-shore. The billows froth . . . . the transitoriness of all things. I think of the blue sea of Ku-Ku-Noor, the Dead Sea, where the bones of the departed decay upon the strand. What child of mine, what grandchild shall perform for me the ancestral rites, for me, against whom the mother of my future children keeps her heart virgin? As the billows break upon the reef, so my overflowing heart breaks upon the inflexible heart of my beloved. How far she keeps from me! On the waves of the sea, shaped like a cormorant, and as unreachable, floats—does it not?—the Ship of Joy, the ship of song and of the dance in fibre-shoes, of light lust and heavy love, a flower-ship. The song is borne to me, as I wander lonely, and the smell of flowers and perfumes is wafted towards me. A girl waves her fan, and with it turns the rudder, and heads for land. Slowly the flower-ship glides, and it seems to me that it carries my beloved. Oh! that it were possible to stay the ship with a cry, that it might turn its course towards me. But even then, what should I gain? With gold I might persuade the flower-maiden to give me her body; how should I persuade her to give me her love?

HI-TANG. Love must be from the heart, and full of the purest passion that a true heart knows. It cannot be persuaded.

PO. I meant no other than to throw a flower to the flower-ship,

(*He throws to* HI-TANG *a flower, which she takes up.*)

as a symbol of my heart. Perhaps the wind of fortune will direct it to the place where it belongs.

HI-TANG. You are so pensive. How can I cheer you? Shall I dance? I know the Dance of the Four Seasons, the Dance of the South Wind, the comic dance of the God of Flocks. Shall I play? The eternal music of Spring. Shall I sing? The Song of White Hairs?

Like the snow so white,
Like the moon so white,
So shall our hair be one day!

Shall I paint or draw something for you. Here is a piece of chalk, which Mr. Tong uses to score up overdue accounts on the door-posts. I will draw here a circle, with the white chalk, on the black screen. *(Does so.)*

PO. The circle is the symbol of the bowl of heaven; the circle is the symbol of the ring which husband and wife exchange, linking heart to heart.

HI-TANG. What is outside this circle, is nothing. What is inside, is everything. How may nothing and everything be linked together. *(Draws spokes in the circle.)* Now it represents a wheel, an ever-turning

wheel. I am bound to the wheel, the wheel of the Car of Fortune, drawn by the horses of the sun down the road of the ages. A young god stands in the car, driving his steeds with a whip of fire, and caring nothing for my trouble and tears.

PO. I kneel to you, Kwanyin, Goddess of Cleansing.

HI-TANG. Stand up! What are you doing? *(Wipes out the spokes from the circle.)* Now it is the symbol of a looking glass, in which I ask my vanity questions. *(Turns before the circle, as if it were a mirror.)* How does this mourning suit me. Does it not add a certain piquancy to desire? I will just powder my face a little and touch my lips with rouge. *(Lifts her white skirt a little.)* My stockings are patterned with green silk, my garters are worked with gold, my feet are like lilies. My red satin shoes are embroidered all over with gold. Above the buckles hover enamelled fire-flies fastened to springs. I think if the Buddha himself were to see me to-day he would forswear his pious ways for ever. Does my headdress please you? Shall I put in this comb a little higher. Do you like my green girdle?

PO. Undo it, Sister of the Green Girdle.

HI-TANG. In this hand, which has yet caressed no man, is my fortune written. Here runs my Line of Life. I see it in the mirror, backwards.

PO. I will strike this looking-glass and break it. *(Clenches his fist.)*

HI-TANG. Then you strike also the picture in the glass—and strike me. Do you want to strike me. I have already been struck once to-day.

PO. Who struck you? I will have him whipped.

HI-TANG. I have forgotten his name. He was not a bad man, only weak. But see, I will do something else with the mirror. I will draw four magic lines in the chalk circle. *(Makes four strokes with the chalk)* and see, your face looks out of the glass. Do you think it is like you? *(Laughing.)* How I caught the likeness? Have I hit it?

PO You have hit me, with an arrow, to the heart!

HI-TANG. *(To the picture):*

I would this were my friend indeed. . . .
The glances of his eyes are birds that fly
To join the eagles in the upper sky.
His lashes are the willow-trees that seem
Beside a quiet lake to droop and dream.
His hands are thin, and pale like snow—
Too many memories have made them so.
His small, red lips are pressed together tight,
As if they had forgotten quite
To smile, and kiss aright.
Alas, they are a two-edged sword of fire,
Sweeping athwart the sleepless night of my desire!

Always, when I look in the mirror in the morning, I will think of you.

PO. I would let fall every mirror that you hold before me. But what if another should displace my picture from the circle of chalk, and set his own there instead?

(A fat face bursts through the paper partition inside the circle of chalk. It is the head of the Mandarin Ma. HI-TANG *and* PO *start back.)*

MA. My name is Ma. Just Ma. And when I name my name Ma, that is enough to make every man bow respectfully before me. For I possess money, money, much money, very much money, so that I can buy anything I want, everything I have a desire for. As a hawk flies forth for prey, so I go adventuring from my palace. If I see a beautiful horse, I mount it. If I see a beautiful woman, I abduct her. If either escapes me, I will go through walls to get it, as I do now. What does the cost of the torn paper matter? I pay for everything, and when I pay, I pay cash. I have bought my degree, and am an honorary doctor of Peking University, although as for letters, I cannot distinguish the character of love from the character of gold. I have a seat upon the Bench, although I know no law, and in my own affairs would find it difficult always to distinguish between theft and real commerce. I am a farmer of taxes and ruthlessly gather

in taxes for myself. It was for a loan for which I indulgently had already granted him a respite, in the payment of his overdue taxes, that a certain gardener Chang hanged himself the day before yesterday in front of my house, with the avowed object of causing me annoyance, which the scoundrel certainly succeeded in, for the mob broke my windows and called me a blood-sucker and a destroyer of the people. And it was to recover from the agitation of the last few days, and, in fact, to dissipate a little, that I entered this house of Mr. Tong, well known to me on previous occasions. For I love to find recreation among flowers and willows. I have had my horoscope cast by my private astrologer and he assures me that, for my love enterprises, to-day is doubly propitious. (*Sees* HI-TANG.) A new flower in Mr. Tong's garden! Allow me to greet you, my dear young lady. You are so fragile that I hardly dare to touch you. You might break. You seem so light that I scarcely venture to talk to you; my breath might blow you away, up into the clouds, and above the clouds, among the reeling stars—and what would be left to me then? I should remain disconsolate, alone with my love-longing upon the comfortless earth.

(He claps his hands three times. TONG ENTERS.*)*

TONG. Your Excellency wishes—?

MA. Tong, this young lady, whom I only set eyes

on a moment ago, would suit me admirably. A young girl like this stirs my heart.

TONG. She is yet untouched.

MA. A virgin? eh?

TONG. A virgin! and virgins are as a fox in the Autumn. *(Laughs unctuously.)*

MA. You have palmed off many a false virgin upon me, Tong, don't deny it! But this virgin is genuine, I feel that, Tong. This virgin is genuine, genuine as the gold that I am going to give for her. I will buy the young lady from you. Altogether, body and soul. No arguments, Tong! No refusal from the lady. You belong to Mr. Tong! he can do with you what he will. Later, you will belong to me, and I shall do with you what I will. I offer you a hundred taels in gold.

TONG. Excellency, she cost me two hundred.

(The PRINCE *comes forward from the background.)*

PO. I bid three hundred.

MA. Four hundred.

PO. Five hundred.

(Tong rubs his hands. He has lifted HI-TANG *onto a table, like an object displayed for auction.)*

MA. Six hundred.

PO. Seven hundred.

MA. A thousand.

PO. *(Blenching.)* I must retire from the contest. I cannot overbid a thousand taels. The lady——

(He points to HI-TANG *and to* MA)

is yours.

(Tries to whisper to HI-TANG.)

MA. Sweep the snow from your own door, and do not concern yourself with the frost on other people's roofs.

(PO *goes out.*)

HI-TANG. He drove my father to his death and now Fate casts me into his arms. I am but human. What can I do? What must be, will be! and what the gods permit, they must intend. They guided my hand when I dug my father's grave, and when I cast earth upon his coffin. They guided my hand when I drew the circle of chalk. They will not fail me. New circles shall I draw on the black wall of fate, as the God of Night writes upon the dome of heaven with stars. Mr. Tong, be so kind as to send word to my mother that I am to be married to-day to Mr. Ma.

TONG. I am at your service, honoured lady. Ha, ha! The God of Good Luck does not hang upon my walls for nothing. Father Tong has made your fortune for you.

MA. Hi-tang, do you know the duties of a wife towards her husband.

HI-TANG. I know what is set down in the book Siao. The wife must be silent when the husband speaks, must smile upon him when he censures her, must coax him when he is ill-tempered, must thank him when he chastises her, must love him when he scorns and hates her.

MA. *(Lifts* HI-TANG *in his arms and carries her off.)* Come! my house awaits you!

CURTAIN.

第一折

ACT II

(SCENE: *Garden and verandah in front of* MA'S *house. In the background is seen the street.)*

MRS. MA. My name is Yu-pi, which means a jewel. I am Mr. Ma's head-wife, his spouse of the first-class. It is now just a year since Mr. Ma brought a second wife into the house, an intolerable person named Hi-tang, of whose moral qualities I will not lower myself to speak. But it is enough to say that Mr. Ma took her off the streets, where she played the disgraceful part of a singer, dancer, and—not to give it a harder name—courtesan in a tea-house. I am cut to the soul that Mr. Ma should prefer such a person to me, his wife of the first rank. As if that were not enough she has contrived to bear him a son, while my womb has remained unfruitful. The gods weigh the fate of men in a golden balance. Woe is me! What fate awaits me, if I cannot bend my fortune to me with my own weak hands. But there is one who will help me to happiness, one who will be true to me in life or death.

CHOW. *(Entering.)* That one is none other than your willing servant, Chow, Officer of Justice in the local courts.

MRS. MA. I am glad to see you, Chow, but why do you come here at this hour?

CHOW. Mr. Ma was kind enough to invite me on a matter of business.

MRS. MA. What sort of business?

CHOW. I have not yet been instructed, honoured lady.

MRS. MA. I had a dream last night. I dreamed that we were both going along a stony road many, many miles. The sun scorched unbearably, and there was no tree, no shrub, not the shadow of a shadow. I was so thirsty that I thought I should die, for there was no spring of water, far and wide. Then you took a knife, Chow, and plunged it in your heart, and your blood ran down, and as you were dying you said: Drink my blood, Yu-pi, I shed it willingly for you.

CHOW. And you—

MRS. MA. I drank your blood and was refreshed and made well. I built for you a splendid tomb and passed my days in it weeping and lamenting your heroic death. And it seemed to me in my dream that I loved you only more profoundly when you were dead than when you were alive.

CHOW. When shall we belong to one another before all the world, and not secretly as now, in the garden, when Mr. Ma has gone out?

MRS. MA. Soon, perhaps sooner than you think.

CHOW. Since I saw you, Yu-pi, I know that a starry goddess has left her place in the circle of heaven and come down to shine upon earth. You are like a fire-fly, fluttering before me, and many times I seem to catch it and hold it in my hand, astounded. It shines, but burns me not. It always flies away, and always I must follow it through bush and thicket. Yu-pi, sometimes I despair completely, and sometimes it seems to me that it would be better to end my miserable life now, than to suffer it any longer, dragging my wretched days as a tow-boat drags its load of barges along the Yang-tse-kiang. I always carry with me in the folds of my robe, a comforter, the comforter that brings eternal comfort.

MRS. MA. Dearest Chow! What frightful thoughts you have. Show me what you have got in the fold of your robe.

CHOW. *(Takes out a small box.)* I bought it from a monk in the temple of Wu-Wang.

MRS. MA. Poison!

CHOW. I have placed myself under the protection of the God of Crows. There is no one to bury me. I have no kin. My corpse will be thrown into the open fields, and the ravens will come and make a meal of me.

MRS. MA. Dearest Chow, give me the poison; give it me. You must not carry it with you when your mind

is darkened like this. *(She takes the box from him.)* I will take it from you. Who knows if the time may not some day come when we shall take the journey into the underworld—together—

CHOW. To die with you would be my highest felicity.

MRS. MA. Perhaps you shall live with me, and the felicity you speak of will be sweeter still.

(Draws HIM *behind a tree and they embrace.)*

I conjure you by our future together to interpret the Book of the Law to me on a doubtful point, and to give me enlightenment on this question. Who is heir to goods and gold, to house and home, when the husband dies?

CHOW. The heir in such a case is the head-wife, the spouse of the first rank.

MRS. MA. *(Joyful.)* Chow!

CHOW. Yet if she be childless, the inheritance is taken by another.

(MRS. MA *stamps her foot.*)

CHOW. If an inferior wife has borne a child, then she and the child enter into the rights of sole heir, and the head-wife receives a certain allowance.

MRS. MA. So that is my fate when Ma dies. Yet did not I serve him faithfully when this harlot

Hi-tang was not yet in the world? Now must I fall to poverty and scorn, and bear my age like a heavy sack of flax, while she with her husband is carried past me in her golden litter, and I crouch by the roadside begging a couple of *kesch!*

CHOW. That will never happen so long as I live!

MRS. MA. You great child! Are you not as poor as a church mouse. Your paltry salary—and Mr. Chu, the chief judge, cheats you out of most of that—scarcely suffices to buy you tobacco. Must you not be always borrowing a few taels from me? And unless I sent you rice and cakes you would often grow hungry.

CHOW. Do you see any way out of this misery?

MRS MA. *(Slowly.)* I see—one way. Will you promise me to follow it, even if it should be a crooked way? Will you close your eyes and trust to me for guidance? For the sake of your love for me?

CHOW. I will promise, although I see no way.

MRS. MA. The hour when the Court opens has just begun to strike. I will go and tell Mr. Ma that you are here.

(Goes out.)

CHOW. In the law, men call me Chow-hi, Chow, distinguished by his virtues. Shall I be able to bear this honourable title much longer? This evening I

shall kindle an incense offering to drive away the evil spirits which have already begun to take possession of my house and heart.

(MA *appears on the verandah, behind him* MRS. MA *and* HI-TANG. *The three bow to one another*—CHOW *does the same.)*

MA.

How deep in the valley flows the dark river,
And the town lies beside it like soldiers in battle
Slain, or a-weary of blood-lust and murder.
The houses are scattered hither and thither,
And high in the midst of them rises a watch tower,
The sun aglint on its summit.
The Yang-tse-kiang hides pearls in its waters,
Lost in its dark stream; yet he who, at midnight,
Heart pure, and armed with a strong incantation,
Fishes for pearls, by good fortune may find one.
More fortunate I, with heart none of the purest,
And no charm to aid me, found me a jewel.
Shining more brightly than gems that the Emperor
Sets in his coronet, shone this pearl for me,
Dearer to me than the pearls of the Indies.

CHOW. Your servant Chow is honoured most highly to be able, perhaps, with the insignificant strength of his soul and spirit, to perform for your Excellency some modest service.

(MRS. MA *and* HI-TANG *bring in a straw mat which they spread out on the ground.)*

MA. Pray be seated.

(MA *and* CHOW *sit on the straw mat.)*

(To the women.) Leave us.

(HI-TANG *and* MRS. MA *go out.)*

CHOW. What a beautiful Spring day!

MA. Genial and mild as a day in Summer. It does my old limbs good. So does Hi-tang.

(CHOW *is silent.)*

I am aware that in the law men call you Chow-hi, and that you deserve this complimentary name through your virtue, justice, and integrity.

CHOW. My services are trifling, my qualities of character unworthy of prominence. In short—they exaggerate.

MA. I have sent for you to-day to ask you to look after my interests in a legal matter that has been in my mind for a long time.

CHOW. I will not fail to serve you to the utmost bounds of possibility.

MA. On the question of the fee we shall easily come to an agreement. I hear that you do not live in the most prosperous circumstances.

CHOW. I can, unfortunately, not deny it.

MA. I want you, within the bounds of reason naturally, to name the sum you desire, in advance.

CHOW. And what is this affair, if I may be permitted the question?

MA. I have decided to obtain a divorce from Yu-pi, my wife of the first rank, and to raise Hi-tang to her place. I love Hi-tang, and she has borne me a son. I entrust you with the dispatch of all the judicial formalities.

(CHOW *springs to his feet.)*

MA. Why do you not remain seated?

CHOW. I have been suffering lately from rheumatism, and the straw-mat lets through the dampness of the ground, especially in spring. I beg your pardon for my lack of manners.

MA. Well? Will you accept my commission?

CHOW. I need not say that I am enraptured to be of service to you.

MA. It would make the divorce easier if Mrs. Ma could be discovered in an indiscretion—some affair with a man, not sanctioned by the moral code.

CHOW. Such an affair can no doubt be contrived, if necessary. Adultery can be arranged.

MA. I see that we understand one another.

(Claps his hands thrice. MRS. MA *and* HI-TANG *appear.)*.

Yu-pi, show this gentleman to the door. Hi-tang, you have not yet shown me the boy to-day. Come show him to me.

(Both go into the house.)

MRS MA. What does he want?

CHOW. He wishes to be divorced.

MRS. MA. From—me?

CHOW. From you. He instructed me to initiate divorce proceedings.

MRS. MA. We must act. Every delay is folly—we should be false to ourselves.

CHOW. What will you do?

MRS. MA. Close your eyes. May the dark gods be with you!

(MRS. MA *goes into the house. At the garden-fence appears* CHANG-LING, *completely in rags.*)

CHANG-LING. Long have I wandered
From house to house, from town to town,
My youth, my goods, I've squandered,
Now Fortune treads me down.

And hours roll by, and days, and
years,
My heart is stone, my head appears
Dust-white, like the long road I
tread.
Falsehood's triumphant, truth is
dead.

No house, but the open field I find,
No comrade have I but the un-
friendly wind.
Ladies and gentlemen, pity me yet,
Don't be unkind!
If I'm a tippler, 'tis but to forget.

How miserably I take my way through the world! My heart smoulders, flame under ashes, only smoke and soot to be seen. By day I sleep in the hole of a hollow tree. By night I travel, fluttering hither and thither like a bat. Darkness suits me well. My eyes cannot bear the light. Where are all my fine clothes? I have drunk them away in bars and taverns. A few tattered rags hang upon my back. My belly is shrivelled like a dried plum. I kneel before the temple doors and croak in a hoarse whisper: A copper, beautiful lady, in the name of the Goddess Kwanyin! Give me a copper, and I will pray that you yourself may become a goddess, and have your image sculptured in rock crystal. A copper, noble sir, in the name of the God Fo, to whose gilt image you are on your way to offer

gifts. Gild for me, I pray you, an hour of my black days, with your alms. . . . I once came across an old sorcerer, and enquired of him concerning the nature of heaven and earth. He answered me: Brother, let Heaven and Earth instruct you! The three great powers are Heaven, Earth and Man. What will you do with your power? Discernment and meditation will raise you to the stars, and you will move in a golden orbit about the Milky Way. I was silent, and meditated, and when I had meditated, I joined a secret society pledged to better the lot of poor men. The Creator of the Universe never intended that millions should be the slaves of the few, of those few in whose lap mere chance has cast abundance of gold and precious stones. This terrible gulf between rich and poor must be abolished. Alas! that men must sell their souls, mothers their daughters, to preserve a life spent in nakedness and want. Father Heaven and Mother Earth have given no right to a few rich men to live in luxury, by devouring their million brothers. The sweat and toil of the oppressed goes to feed their dissipation. The shining face of the sun, the hidden treasures of the earth, all the pleasures of the world should be common property. To feed and clothe the many, the excess of the few must be taken away. Mankind must in the end be freed from its sorrow. The noble seed of Man should not be choked by inhuman weeds. Such a foul

weed, that steals the ground from the flowers and the fruitful trees, is Mr. Ma, the owner of this house. He drove my father to his death, and me into wretchedness, and compelled my sister to sell herself to him. For a long time his name has been marked with a circle of chalk in the Black-list of the Brotherhood. That means that he must die. His doom is spoken, and I am chosen to execute it.

HI-TANG. What does the strange man want at the garden fence?

CHANG-LING. He begs most humbly for a bowl of rice. He is hungry.

HI-TANG. Wait, strange man!

(Goes and returns immediately with a bowl of rice.)

Who are you, strange man?

CHANG-LING. The son of a father that hanged himself, the son of a mother who died of grief, the brother of a sister who sold herself.

HI-TANG. Brother! Let me kneel before you, and kiss the dust from your shoes. How far have you wandered through mud and mire!

CHANG-LING. Can you forgive me that I struck you like a mule? How can one man strike another, or a brother strike his sister?

HI-TANG. Our mother died while you were away.

Mr. Ma, my master, has erected a monument for her, seven storeys high.

CHANG-LING. If Mr. Ma had built for our father a house of a single storey, where he might have lived; if he had even remitted his debts, he would have acted better.

HI-TANG. He acted as his nature bade him.

CHANG-LING. Did it bid him buy you, and hold you as his slave, to serve his lowest passions?

HI-TANG. Mr. Ma bought me as his slave, but he has learned to honour me, and treat me as his wife.

CHANG-LING. And in what does this treatment consist?

HI-TANG. He has given me a child.

CHANG-LING. What! you have given yourself, and lowered yourself to propagate this accursed race of Ma?

HI-TANG. It is my child, also; and I too shall live on earth in him when my body has long rotted in the coffin. I entreat you, do not hate Ma. It is your misery that makes you unjust to him. I will beg him to get you a post. He has a great deal of influence. He will certainly find something for you.

CHANG-LING. I will take no favour from his criminal hands.

HI-TANG. He is not a criminal. He is neither good nor bad. This is his character. He knows neither one nor the other. He lives like a panther in the jungle.

CHANG-LING. Such a beast of prey, feeding on the blood of living men, must be hunted and killed.

HI-TANG. What would you do?

CHANG-LING. (*Shows a knife.*) See this knife—?

HI-TANG. I implore you—

CHANG-LING. Do you see the sign here on the hilt?

HI-TANG. It is the sign of the white lotus flower.

CHANG-LING. I am a member of the Brotherhood of the White Lotus. The Brotherhood has pronounced his doom. His house is to be set on fire, and plundered in the confusion. The fire-brigade has been advised by the Brotherhood. It will come to extinguish the fire, too late.

HI-TANG. The wheel of Fortune's Car revolves again, and I am bound to it with cords. I will speak to him. He will make the Brotherhood a present of a thousand taels in gold. Indeed he will!

CHANG-LING. He will not escape from justice. The justice of the Brotherhood is incorruptible.

HI-TANG. The oracle! Let me consult the oracle of the circle of chalk. (*She draws a circle.*) Give me the knife. I throw it towards the circle. The circle encloses his life. If the knife lights inside the circle, so have the gods decided, so shall the lotus blossom unfold itself, so must he die. (*She throws the knife; it cuts the chalk line.*) The knife is neither in nor out, it has cut the circle's bounding line. Brother, take the knife and tell the Brotherhood of this strange oracle. Let the wisest of the Brotherhood decide. But promise me this, not to pursue this judgment further until the meaning of the oracle is made plain.

CHANG-LING. I will report it to my Brothers. I will come back.

HI-TANG. Brother, dear brother, how needy you look. Here, take this fur jacket. (*She takes it off*) and put it on over your rags. Now go, and Fo be with you, and may he direct the arrow of your will to the right mark.

CHANG-LING. May Kwanyin bless you!

(*He goes out.* HI-TANG *sees him to the garden fence.*)

(MRS. MA *enters.*)

MRS. MA. You were speaking at the garden fence with a strange man! Who was he?

(HI-TANG *is silent.*)

I can very well imagine who he was. He did not come here with any very exalted purpose. Are you not ashamed to converse with men in the street? You have not yet unlearned your tea-house manners. Have you forgotten what it is to be the wife—even the under-wife—of an honourable man? You tread the honour of Mr. Ma, my exalted lord and master, under foot. Do you know what you deserve? Thirty strokes on the soles of the feet. And what more do I see? What has become of the little coat you were wearing over your dress earlier in the day?

HI-TANG. I have given it away.

MRS. MA. A present from Mr. Ma on your birthday, and you have given it away!

HI-TANG. I gave it to that poor man at the fence. He is so poor, and we are so rich. He was a beggar.

MRS. MA. Beggars here, beggars there! Have you sunk so low already that you must seek a lover among beggars?

HI-TANG. The Moral Law teaches us to be kind to the poor.

MRS. MA. What you call kindness was not intended by any Moral Law.

HI-TANG. So much wretchedness is in the world. Should we not try, to the best of our poor strength, to share, and lighten it?

MRS. MA. Mr. Ma makes regular contributions to the Poor Box. That suffices. But too much of this controversy. Mr. Ma will take his tea here in the garden, as the weather is fine. Set the tea-table.

(*Does so.* MA *comes out of the house.* MRS. MA *and* HI-TANG *bow before him.*)

MA. Where is the tea?

HI-TANG. Coming, dear lord.

(*Goes into the house.*)

MRS. MA. May I ask my lord a question?

MA. If you please.

MRS. MA. Hi-tang seems to have stood near to your heart for some time.

MA. She has given me an heir.

MRS. MA. It is now many months since you paid me the honour of a visit at night.

MA. I am not to blame for your account keeping.

MRS. MA. Hi-tang betrays you. I saw her standing talking to a strange man at the garden fence. Perhaps she has the darkest designs, who knows? And she gave to this stranger the fur-trimmed over-mantle that you gave her for her birthday.

MA. I will speak to Hi-tang about this at once.

(HI-TANG *comes back with a cup of tea.*)

MA. Hi-tang, I have heard a very bad thing about you.

HI-TANG. Not all tongues speak the truth.

MRS. MA. I am not accustomed to lie.

MA. You had a conversation with a strange man here at the garden fence?

HI-TANG. I spoke to a beggar.

MA. You have given him your little fur-trimmed coat, a present from me. Is this how you take care of your husband's gifts, your husband that loves you?

HI-TANG. I serve my lord with all humbleness, and know how to treasure his goods like a dutiful wife. But the beggar had nothing but rags on his body. He was frozen. I was sorry for him.

MA. Did you see this beggar to-day for the first time?

HI-TANG. No.

MRS. MA. Do you realise her unworthiness now?

MA. Who was the beggar?

HI-TANG. My brother.

MRS. MA. Do you believe the creature's lies?

MA. I believe her, because I love her. Ever since I knew you, Hi-tang, you have swayed my heart. You did nothing to persuade me to love you; your

mere existence was enough. Should you not have hated me, who drove your father to his death, and your family into poverty and sorrow? If you had desired my death, it would have been very natural. I carried you off from the tea-house, as a wild ape might carry a woman off into the forest. Yet you were always the same to me, always yourself, tender as a goddess. For what could a goddess give me more than what you have given? Through you for the first time I have learned to believe in the holiness of love. Hi-tang, do you feel that I have the power to love, and that I love you?

HI-TANG. Tears of joy are in my eyes. All will be well now, Ma, all will be well.

MA. For the first time you touched me tenderly of your own free will, Hi-tang. Not mere response to my caresses, but active love. I am glad that the wall between us falls; that no more, as in Tong's house, do I need to come through the wall to reach you. Heaven, Earth, Mankind are the three great powers. You, I, and the child, we are the three little powers. One; and three in one, a single trinity.

MRS. MA. Will you take your tea now, honoured lord?

HI-TANG. I forgot the sugar. How negligent I am!

MRS. MA. Give me the cup. I will put in the

sugar. (*Takes the cup, goes to the Verandah, and finding the box given her by* CHOW, *says softly*) I will put in the sugar that Chow gave me. (*Drops the poison into the tea.*)

HI-TANG. My love for you has unfolded within me like a lotus flower.

MA. I thank you for your love.

HI-TANG. Why do I speak so often of a lotus flower? . . . Remind me when you have drunk your tea to tell you something about a lotus flower.

MRS. MA. (*Gives* HI-TANG *the cup of tea.*) Hand it to him. He will like the tea doubly well from your hands.

MA. Tell me, while I am drinking it, the story of the lotus flower. . . .

(*He drinks and lets the cup fall; it breaks in fragments, and he seizes* HI-TANG *by the wrist.*)

Hi-tang, I am dying!

(*Falls dead, locked in her arms.*)

HI-TANG. My dear husband—my dead, dear husband—I will tell you the story of the lotus flower—don't you hear me? Can't you see me? You are not with me any more!

(*She kneels before* MA *and lays his head in her lap.*)

MRS. MA. Help! Murder! Mr. Ma is poisoned!

(*Serving-men and women rush in.* CHOW *and* CHANG-LING *appear from the street, and soon after a Police Patrol.*)

MRS MA. Ma is dead. We are free.

CHOW. (*Starting back in amazement.*) Who killed him?

(*The Police come up.*)

MRS. MA. This person, Mr. Ma's second wife, and formerly a tea-house girl of the lowest class, has poisoned my illustrious husband, Mr. Ma.

POLICE OFFICER. Bind her!

HI-TANG. I must leave you, Ma, in the first hour that I learned to love you—Give me my child. Don't take my child away from me!

MRS. MA. Your child? You are mad, or worse. She has no child. The child in this house is my child, mine and Mr. Ma's. She was only its nurse.

POLICE OFFICER. Take the murderess away.

CHANG-LING. The gods have decided for me.

HI-TANG. (*Clinging to* MA's *corpse.*) He takes with him to the grave all the tears of my eyes.

CURTAIN.

第二折

ACT III

SCENE: *In the middle background, the Judge's chair, with a table before it. Right and left, chairs for the assistant Judges. In the middle, above the Judge's chair, a tapestry panel displaying the five-clawed dragon. Right and left of it, long, narrow panels with Chinese characters. Before the Judge's chair, on the ground, is drawn a circle of chalk in which the accused has to kneel. Right and left, forward, space for witnesses and the public, separated from the rest of the room by barriers.* CHU-CHU, *the Judge, sits on the seat of judgment, and eats his breakfast.*

CHU. My name is CHU-CHU, and I was appointed by his Imperial Celestial Majesty (*Rises, and sits down again*) Chief Judge of Chu-kong. The public is not negligent in saluting me with befitting reverence; but I bow neither my knee nor my head before such a collection of miserable creatures as I usually see assembled before me. There is never any one in the audience whose rank, dignity, and importance equal mine, and so I would willingly transfer the Court to the market place, so that all men should rise up from their dirty benches to do me honour, paying fitting respect, in my person, to the principles

of Government, Precedence, Law, and Morality. At nine o'clock the Court opens. Meanwhile I can breakfast in peace. (*He nibbles a fruit and takes a bite of bread.*) Breakfast is one of the most important things in life. With a full belly one can look upon an accused with an unprejudiced eye, and if he be guilty, for example, of theft from hunger, one can sentence him to the gallows with a clear conscience. To-day, unfortunately, I am a little indisposed. I have a headache. I spent the night at Mr. Tong's, with those three appetizing girls, Yu, Yo and Yow. While I slept they made music for me with gong, flute and fiddle, and then, when I had rested, we drank rice-spirit in prodigious quantities, and the delicious Yow placed herself at my service body and soul—especially the former. I have here a little water-colour drawing showing the three girls, quite naked, and in the most enticing attitudes. I will inspect it at my leisure and endeavour to prepare myself worthily for this evening. Yu's neck! what a dream! But the cool thighs of Yow are not to be despised. But the sweet little breasts that Yo has! I think I must adjudge the prize to those.

(CHOW *enters.*)

CHOW. I most humbly beg your pardon, Excellency, if I disturb you in your meditations. Mrs. Ma, the accuser in the first case to-day, entreats me, as a sign of her abject reliance upon your Excellency's

judicial insight, to present to you this little purse of gold.

(*Hands him a purse, and withdraws.*)

CHU. (*Letting the gold clink on the table.*) Gold, gold, there is no finer music than gold jingling on a hard table. So beautiful a substance it would be irreligious to despise. Mrs. Ma is an extremely open-handed lady; she shall have the justice she desires. It is not for nothing that people call me Mr. Double-face, with the cloven tongue. I can so involve a case in legal quibbles that no one can question my decisions, and thus the light of justice shines clear. Now I must busy myself for a while in the Book of the Criminal Code.

(*Packs up the money and his breakfast things together and retires into the Central Chamber.*)

The paragraphs upon official procedure will not give *me* a headache, I assure you. I remove them from my book one by one. Ritch, ratsch! (*Tears out leaves*) I have sworn to pronounce justice in accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Imperial House of the Manchus, contained in this book. Thus I commit no perjury, and my heart is as clean as the heart of a new-born lamb.

(*Goes out through the sliding paper door at the back of the stage.*)

(*The space behind the barriers begins to*

fill. MRS. MA *appears, and making a sign to a fat woman, the midwife, draws her into the middle of the room.*)

MRS. MA. Take care! Don't step into the circle of chalk or you yourself will be accused, or else the magic circle will put a spell upon you.

MIDWIFE. Oh dear! Oh, dear! See what 'as happened to me already with coming into court. The shame of it, the shame of it! Oh dear! Oh dear! My heart beats fit to burst my breast, it does. What will my 'usband say? I'm so frightened, Mrs. Ma. What's going to 'appen to me? Will they torture me?

MRS. MA. Don't talk such nonsense Mrs. Len. You are only brought here as a witness. You must testify——

MIDWIFE. Oh dear! Oh dear! I always thought that only men could give evidence. It was terribly hard to persuade myself to come 'ere at all, and now have I got to give evidence all by myself?

MRS. MA. You must bear witness, Mrs. Len, that the boy Li is my child, and not Hi-tang's.

MIDWIFE. But how can I say that when it isn't true?

MRS. MA. 'Sh!

MIDWIFE. But it was I who cut the navel cord between the child and Mrs. Hi-tang.

MRS. MA. Mrs. Len, you are mistaken. Here are twenty gold taels to jog your memory a little.

MIDWIFE. Mrs. Ma is too good, too kind to a poor old woman. Yes, yes, yes, yes, now it dawns on me! In the darkness it was easy to make a mistake. I was confusing you and Hi-tang. This Hi-tang is a proud, haughty sort of person. She comes from the same low class as I do, but she never 'ad a friendly word for me. Always condescending!

MRS. MA. It is no wonder then that she (*sobbing*) has poisoned my beloved husband——

MIDWIFE. You don't say so! Poisoned? Yes, yes, yes, yes, there are some bad people in the world. Then the child can't be hers.

MRS. MA. Come home with me when the trial is over. I have a cast-off dress still in the most beautiful condition. It would be just the thing for you on festival days.

MIDWIFE. My heart-felt thanks, Mrs. Ma (*kisses her hand*) Mrs. Ma is too kind to me, much too kind.

(MRS. MA *lets her go and brings two coolies forward.*)

MRS. MA. You know, my men, what you are to do?

TWO COOLIES. No fear of that!

(*They spit and talk simultaneously with one another.*)

MRS. MA. You are here to help the victory of Justice.

TWO COOLIES. Justice! What is that?

MRS. MA. It is justice if I give you here a couple of taels, and a little packet of tobacco, and you tell the Court what I tell you.

TWO COOLIES. At school we used to learn everything by heart. Just speak plainly. We shall remember it word for word. Our heads are clear of any uncertainty. It was at school that we learned to regulate our lives by proverbs. We know some excellent ones; for example: Money is the first of the virtues; or this: If anyone gives you money, it is but just to serve him faithfully.

MRS. MA. I see that I can spare myself further teaching. You will give evidence that you were Mr. Ma's neighbours, and that some time since, when I bore him a son, he gave a feast for the whole quarter of the town, and an ounce of silver as a present to all the poor people of the district. You must witness that you have often seen me, with Mr. Ma, and the boy, going to pay a visit to the temple of Fo, in order to offer consecrated gifts and incense, that the god might take the child under his protection. You must swear that the boy is my child, and not Hi-tang's.

TWO COOLIES. (*Grinning, raise their hands to swear.*) Have no fear, lady, we know how to tell a tale and stick to it. The oath will be sworn, or you can take some of that poison which, we hear, Hi-tang put in Mr. Ma's tea.

MRS. MA. She is a murderess. Don't forget that. She deserves the worst that can happen to her.

(COOLIES *move back into the crowd.*)

(*The Court bell sounds. The paper door opens, and there appear, moving in solemn procession,* CHU-CHU, CHOW *and three more* JUDGES. *They take their places but remain standing.* TWO OFFICERS *hold in check the witnesses and the public, among whom is* CHANG-LING.)

CHU. In the name of His Imperial Celestial Majesty (*babbles something incomprehensible*) I open this daily session of justice (*The Judges sit*) 739, Case 850. Let us proceed. The case of Ma *contra* Ma. Officer of the Court, bring in the accused.

(OFFICER *brings in* HI-TANG *through a second door in the back-ground.*)

CHU. Accused, take your place within the circle of chalk.

(HI-TANG *does so, kowtows three times and remains standing.*)

CHU. Mr. Chow, you will take down the evidence?

CHOW. Certainly, your Excellency.

CHU. Accused, what is your name?

HI-TANG. Chang-Hi-tang, daughter of Chang and wife of the high-born Mr. Ma.

MRS. MA. *(Interrupting.)* Inferior wife of the high-born Mr. Ma, his mere bedfellow, concubine, so to speak, taken from a house of joy. *I* am his first wife.

HI-TANG. I was properly married to Mr. Ma. And as I had borne him a son, while the womb of his first wife remained fruitless, he intended to raise me to the rank of chief wife, and to divorce Mrs. Ma.

MRS. MA. She lies like a magpie. Look at the impudent creature. She has borne him a child! Oh indeed! When was that then?

CHU. Calm yourself, Mrs. Ma. In the course of justice, the whole truth will be made plain. Who is the accuser?

MRS. MA. I, Yu-pi, chief wife of the lamented Mr. Ma, accuse Hi-tang, daughter of the gardener Chang, and inferior wife of the high-born Mr. Ma, of attempted child-stealing and of the actual poisoning of Mr. Ma.

(Sensation among the Public.)

CHU. Accused, what have you to say to this particulary precise accusation?

HI-TANG. *(Under her breath.)* I am sorry to have to say hard things to her and to accuse her of lying.

CHU. What is the first of the Cardinal Virtues?

HI-TANG. Love.

CHU. Have you loved your husband as your position demanded?

HI-TANG. I served him always with respect, and learned to love him on the last day of his life. Then he opened to me the secret chamber of his heart, and set a light in it, and I could see that in his heart was a throne erected for me. But the throne on which another woman once sat was empty. A faded twig of peach-blossom lay on the cushion.

MRS. MA. She recites poems, as she learnt to do in that disgraceful profession of hers. Love-making and verse-making go very well together.

CHU. What is the second of the Cardinal Virtues?

HI-TANG. Justice.

CHU. And with justice shall you be judged, and no otherwise.

HI-TANG. Justice—I hope that I shall have justice, although perhaps I do not deserve it. For have I always acted and judged rightly? Had I not for a

whole year an unjust opinion of my husband. I pray the gods that they will take away all veils from my eyes, that I may see clearly, and not judge unjustly that woman, who is so bitter against me, and whom I have always tried to serve with the respect due to a first wife. I have never said a bad word to her: I have never harboured an evil thought against her: I have never done her an injury. This woman, as I noticed when I used to rouge her cheeks in the morning, has as many faces as an actor wears masks; and now plays this rôle, now that. Which of her faces is the true one? Or what true face lies behind all these masks? Can a mouse play the part of a dragon-fly? Can a hyena imitate a lamb or a hare?

MRS. MA. To be called these beast-names by a woman to whom I have done nothing but good, and who slanders me shamelessly! I will give her a name. She is a venomous serpent.

CHU. What is the third of the Cardinal Virtues, accused?

HI-TANG. Propriety.

CHU. You allow it to be absent from your behaviour?

HI-TANG. I ask pardon. But this concerns my life, my lord, it concerns my child. Shall I let my child be taken from me on the grounds of propriety and good behaviour? My lord, in prison they took my

child away from me. They left me without news of him. Was that decent, was that seemly, to torture a mother so? Li, my boy, do you recognize me?

MRS. MA. The hypocrite. Never was the bare wall of vice so overspread with the paper flowers of imitation virtue. How can she know the feelings of a mother, when her womb is as withered as a tree in the waterless desert of Gobi?

HI-TANG. My womb withered? I cursed with barrenness? It is not mine, the highest privilege of woman? Did I not bear in this my body, under this my heart, for nine months long, my boy, Li, the accomplishment of my desire, the hope of my old age? I blossomed only that I might bear fruit. The blossom falls away, but the fruit ripens, ripens in fine and stormy weather, and grows through sorrow and through joy. I who found no joy till I had him, melt away in joy since I gave him birth. Fo has honoured me, Fo has blessed me. I burn incense to him every day of my life.

MRS. MA. See how the accomplished actress plays characters not her own. She might be playing on the wooden trestles of the mountebanks at the yearly fair. Why doesn't she play the innocent for a troop of strolling actors? She might hope to impose upon stupid peasants in the villages, but not upon the High Court of Chu-kong.

CHU. What is the fourth of the Cardinal Virtues, accused?

HI-TANG. Truth.

CHU. Hold fast then to this virtue.

HI-TANG. May my eyes grow blind, my tongue dumb, my ear deaf, if what I speak be not the whole truth. This child is mine. My womb bore it.

CHU. On this point we will interrogate the midwife who was present at the birth of the boy Li. Come forward, Mrs. Len.

MIDWIFE. Oh dear! Oh dear! What have I done to be brought into Court like this?

CHOW. Fear nothing, my good woman. You are only requested to honour the fourth of the beforementioned Cardinal Virtues—truth.

MIDWIFE. I will honour it, your honour, as much as your honour pleases.

CHU. Well, what happened?

MIDWIFE. Oh! to be sure, there were great 'appenings, that there were, though it's me as says it, great 'appenings when the boy Li was born.

CHOW. *(To* CHU.) The good woman makes use of such an atrocious idiom that I am afraid your Excellency will find her completely incomprehensible.

MIDWIFE. What's right is right, and what's wrong is wrong. I didn't expect for the 'igh Court of Justice to go about for to insult me, that I didn't. I may be a simple, low-class woman, but an idiom I bain't and never 'ave been.

HI-TANG. It was you who cut the navel cord when my boy was born. Don't you recognize me now?

MIDWIFE. *(Stepping up to her calmly.)* I recognize the accused now. She is the inferior wife of the late lamented, high-born Mr. Ma—Fo be merciful to him!

CHU. And is she the mother of the boy Li?

MIDWIFE. She used often to carry the boy in her arms; she waited on him, and rocked him to sleep, for that's the inferior wife's duty, but the boy's mother is she—*(pointing to* MRS. MA). The room where she was confined was shaded, and in the darkness a body could hardly tell mother from child, but there's no doubt that it was Mrs. Ma gave him birth.

HI-TANG. Mrs. Len, you were with me night and day while I was lying in pain. You were so good and tender to me; I owe you my child and my life. It was you who arranged the mats comfortably for me to lie on. You cut the navel cord, you called my husband, and lit the candles before the family shrine. You wept with me when I wept for happiness; oh! weep with me now when I am miserable and afraid.

The truth! the truth! The child is mine. Don't let them take it from me.

MRS. MA. This woman is guilty of striving to influence the witness.

CHU. The accused shall be beaten for contempt of court. If she offends again she will be flogged with whips. She shall be made to kneel on splinters of broken glass, and her knuckles shall be crushed.

(A couple of SOLDIERS *spring forward and strike her two or three times with stiff, awkward movements.)*

HI-TANG. What fire burns my back? What pain hurts my breathing. My life-breath is flying away like a frightened moth.

(The CHILD *begins to cry.)*

CHU. Silence! I order the child to be silent.

CHOW. *(To* MRS. LEN.*)* Will you swear to your evidence?

MIDWIFE. Of course I will.

CHU. The witness will be sworn. Speak the words after me: I swear by the bones of my ancestors—

MIDWIFE. Bones of my ancestors—

CHU. That I speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—

MIDWIFE. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing like the truth—

CHU. I have nothing suppressed, and nothing interpolated—So help me Fo!

MIDWIFE. So help me Fo!

CHU. The witness is dismissed.

CHOW. Two more witnesses. The brothers Sang.

TWO COOLIES. *(Speaking together, come forward and recite.)* My lords, Mr. Ma was a very able, consequential, and distinguished man. Naturally, we cannot flatter ourselves that we were among his intimate friends. But when a child was born to his honourable head wife, he gave a feast to the whole quarter of the town, in which we also have the honour to live, a celebration so lavish and splendid that it makes us drunk even now only to think of it. Each of us received as well an ounce of silver as a present. Since then we have often seen Mr. Ma and Mrs. Ma with the child in her arms, making their way to the Temple of Fo, Protector of Children.

HI-TANG. You lie, Mrs. Ma has corrupted you. It was me you saw daily, hurrying with the child to the Temple of Fo, to beg the god's protection.

TWO COOLIES. The truth of our evidence will become ever more plain. We do not trouble ourselves about that. If a lie should escape our truth-loving lips may a boil grow upon them as big as a tea-cup!

CHU. Are the witnesses ready to swear to the truth of this evidence?

TWO COOLIES. We are ready.

CHU. Repeat the oath after me—

(Ceremony as above.)

The hearing of evidence concerning this attempted child-stealing is closed. There remains the question of the poisoning. Who saw the accused put poison instead of sugar into the tea of her late husband in order to possess herself by fraud, of the child and the inheritance?

MRS. MA. I did.

HI-TANG. Light of Heaven, you have veiled yourself from my sight.
When will you shine?
Voice of Heaven, you are silent.
When will you speak?
Will the truth of my poor husband's murder
Rest in darkness, never come to light?
Alas! I am helpless and without defence
And on my head is a crown of nettles.

CHOW. The woman Hi-tang had another motive also for ridding herself of Mr. Ma.

CHU. And that was?

CHOW. May I ask the accused a question?

CHU. Please do so.

CHOW. Accused. Who was the cause of your father's suicide. (HI-TANG *is silent.)* I will answer

that question myself. Mr. Ma was the cause of her father's death. He owed him money which he could not pay. For some time the accused has husbanded a desire for vengeance against her husband, because he drove her father to his death. To the motive of possessing the inheritance must be added the motive of revenge.

CHU. My learned colleague, your demonstration appears to me most opportune. The accused appears to be weighed down with guilt.

HI-TANG. It is fortune that weighs me down like a grave-stone.

CHU. *(To* MRS. MA.) Can you swear that you saw the deed?

MRS. MA. I swear by the bones of my ancestors that she, who is not the mother of the child, removed her husband from her path with poison in order to obtain by fraud the child and the inheritance.

HI-TANG. *(In terror.)* She swears the truth!

CHU. The guilty party has confessed. The hearing of evidence is over. The Court will now proceed to judgment.

*(*CHU, CHOW, *&c. go out.)*

MRS. MA. You have lost the game.

HI-TANG. I played no game.

MRS. MA. You will soon be shorter by a head.

HI-TANG. They may cut off my head, they may tear my heart out of my body, yet from my body, though it may be torn and broken on the wheel, the flame of truth will spring.

MRS. MA. I spoke the truth.

HI-TANG. You said it. See, I kneel before you. Take all Mr. Ma's possessions, take everything you want. Look, this little chain will suit you, perhaps. It is strung with Indian pearls. These shoes are embroidered. Take all, take all, but leave me my child.

MRS. MA. The child is mine.

(The COURT *returns.)*

CHU. In the name of his Celestial Majesty *(mumbles)* hear the following judgment pronounced by this Court of Justice. The accused, Chang-Hi-tang, for attempted child-stealing, and for the actual murder by poison of her husband Ma, is condemned to die by the headman's sword. Officer, place her neck in the nine-pound block!

OFFICER. Very good, your Excellency. (HE *drags* HI-TANG *to the block.)* Put your head in the block, you baggage!

HI-TANG. Justice! My child!

CHU. Shameless wretch. I shall strike you in the face with my slippers. Mark this. If I pronounce a

sentence, it *is* justice. My proceedings are entirely impartial, objective, and according to law.

(A COURIER *enters.)*

COURIER. Letters from Peking!

CHU. *(Opens the dispatch.)* I am prostrated. I request all present to bow their foreheads to the earth. His Celestial Majesty has, in his five-and-seventieth year, succumbed to the infirmities of old age. The successor chosen by lot is Prince Po, who has ascended the Imperial Throne. He sends to his faithful subjects his Imperial greetings. All death-sentences are suspended, and judges and judged are summoned to Peking by the Imperial Prerogative. The Emperor's first act will be the investigation of justice! *(Wipes the cold sweat from his brow.)*.

CHANG-LING. *(In the public part of the Court House.)* What are you afraid of, you old fool? Emperor and judges, you are both in the same boat. The new Emperor will be no better than the old. Under his dragon-banner, we poor men may wander through the streets with no more rights than before. Hi-tang is as guiltless as a sunflower, or the evening star. She shall not die. Innocence is immortal. I will stay the executioner's lifted arm, and tear the axe from his hands.

CHU. Who is this fellow who blasphemes His Majesty? Put him in the block too. He has blasphemed

the Majesty of the Emperor. His Majesty will be grateful to me for bringing before him such an evil-doer, who undermines the foundations of the State like a mole. It shall not be said that I allowed revolutionary elements to flourish in my district. To Peking!

CURTAIN

第三折

ACT IV

SCENE: *Open country, with a snowstorm.* SOLDIERS *are heard singing—Off:*

Soldier, you are my comrade,
Marching by my side,
The Emperor, whom we obey,
Has stolen all our girls away.
Soldier, you are my comrade,
Marching by my side.

Soldier, you are my comrade.
When you had lost your sword,
Your death was near, when I stepped in,
For I'm your friend through thick and thin.
Soldier, you are my comrade,
When you had lost your sword—

Soldier you are my comrade.
And when our bones are bleached and dry
And round us apes in the jungle cry,
Still together, you and I,
Soldier you are my comrade,
Till our bones are bleached and dry!

(Enter HI-TANG, *bound and with her neck encircled by the cangue, escorted by two soldiers, who beat her.)*

FIRST SOLDIER. Ho there! Forward, daughter of a tortoise. I will do your mother a mischief if you don't move your legs a bit faster. Do you think it's a pleasure for us to escort you through a snowstorm?

HI-TANG. Have pity on me, kind sir!

FIRST SOLDIER. Hop-la! grasshopper, jump a little.

HI-TANG. The weight of the cangue is too much for me. It pulls me back. I am at the end of my strength.

FIRST SOLDIER. And we are at the end of our patience.

HI-TANG. I am in pain.

SECOND SOLDIER. Pain is good for a woman; it develops her character—that is written down in all the school-books. Forward.

HI-TANG. I am dying.

FIRST SOLDIER. A good death is the better half of life. Get on!

HI-TANG. Don't you know what is enjoined in the holy catechism, to have pity on every creature?

SECOND SOLDIER. Yes, pity on every creature. Everyone can choose the creature he is going to have

pity on, and in this frightful snowstorm I choose to have pity on myself.

HI-TANG. I am falling. The road is frozen over. I can find no more ground for my feet.

FIRST SOLDIER. You lost your footing long ago. Get on!

*(*HI-TANG *falls.)*

Wait, I'll teach you to fall. Damned baggage—

(Falls himself.)

You've put a spell on me.

HI-TANG. My knees are broken—

FIRST SOLDIER. Those who choose to be criminals must abide by the consequences. What did you do your fat husband in for, and try to steal the other woman's child?

HI-TANG. The judge was unjust. I call upon the Lord of the Seven Hills, who reigns above the clouds, the Lord of the southern pole-star, the Lord of the hundred names, to bear witness to it. He is more righteous than men.

FIRST SOLDIER. What! do you accuse the chief judge, his Excellency Chu-chu, of unjust judgment. Thank your stars that we turn a deaf ear to such insolent accusations. By all the rules we ought to bring you to trial for it, and cut off your head in the sight

of all men. You should be whipped a little anyway for contempt of court.

SECOND SOLDIER. Why don't you give us something? Money, money! Then you can say what the devil you like about the honesty or dishonesty of the judge. Then you could go your own way, and we'd make ourselves scarce.

HI-TANG. I would give you something willingly, whether you let me free or not—but indeed you must not. You would get into trouble for it—but I have nothing but my poor heart.

FIRST SOLDIER. Love is cheap.

HI-TANG. If my accuser had been a wolf, and my judge a hyena, you would have pitied me. If a lying jackdaw had witnessed against me, it could not have found such lies to utter as those witnesses found against me.

FIRST SOLDIER. You accuse the witnesses of perjury. Where's your proof then?

HI-TANG. In my heart.

FIRST SOLDIER. Your heart. We can't see into your heart. It must be black enough anyway.

HI-TANG. Yet there shines a bright light in it—hope.

SECOND SOLDIER. Hope—for what?

HI-TANG. Are all men wicked? Is each the devourer of his fellow?

FIRST SOLDIER. You shouldn't judge everybody by yourself. I, for instance, have never done what was wrong. Look at me! I have always obeyed every instruction contained in the Book of Etiquette. I have honoured my father and my mother and bought for them expensive coffins. I do my duty loyally, I have a good conscience.

HI-TANG. How can you have a good conscience when you can strike a poor creature like me?

FIRST SOLDIER. How do I know that you're innocent?

HI-TANG. I always believed that the innocent had a brightness about their foreheads. I read it in my first school-book.

SECOND SOLDIER. Let me look at you. I see no brightness about your forehead, but the brightness of the snow-flakes.

HI-TANG. My child—where is my child?

FIRST SOLDIER. With his mother, obstinate woman, that even the cangue can't constrain to heart-searching and repentance.

HI-TANG. Since no man will hear me, I will cry my woes aloud in the snowstorm. Hear me, storm! I cry to you snow! Ye stars behind the clouds, listen!

And ye that sleep the sleep of winter—mole, and marmot, and toad, ye slumbering demons also, awake! There should be no sleep, and no dream while crime and injustice triumph over a human creature. Ye dead in your coffins, whether your shrouds be of brocade or sackcloth, shake your loose bones like pagoda bells, let them ring out, let them call to mutiny and rebellion. Rise up! Come over the white fields to me, like white rats over the snow. Help me, who am your sister already, and have half taken leave of life! I call you, ye dead, to judgment over me. In you there is no falsehood, for ye have cast off all the trappings of life, even your flesh. Ye dead murderers, come and say if I murdered; ye dead liars, come and say if I lied; ye dead mothers, all the mothers of the world, cry out, if I demand not my child with right and justice, from the hands of robbers. See, the earth herself mourns for me. She has put on a white mantle in my honour. It snows—it snows—it snows—white—always white—the earth wears a robe like the white fleece of a sheep, and she has put upon her head a cap made of white fox fur. Like the snow so white, like the moon so white, so shall our hair be one day. What is that circle in the sky, white as if drawn with chalk? Between the clouds, thou white face of the moon, shine hope upon me! The gods are shearing their little lambs. My tears fall thick on the flakes, and stain the snow red. I am

weeping blood! I hear the cry of the ravens in the air; I see their footprints in the snow. They say that writing was framed on the footprints of birds. I read my sorrowful fortune in the snow. Ah, only the carrion crow bewails my lot. There is a moaning under the frozen surface of the stream. It is the River Goddess; she sighs for the wretchedness of men. I pray, kind sirs, take your swords and break a hole in the ice, and let me sink into the wet, cold flood, and be swallowed up. Icy is the embrace of the River Goddess—yet it will be as fire compared with the cold hearts of men.

FIRST SOLDIER. We have listened too long already to your croaking, water-frog. Get on now! It is still a long way to Peking, where the new Emperor will be pleased, in his own Celestial Person, to attend the first execution of his reign.

SECOND SOLDIER. It is an honour for you to die before the eyes of the Emperor. See that you put your head on the block gracefully, so that he may be pleased with you.

FIRST SOLDIER. Get on.

(Like an echo from the other side: Get on with you, you bundle of rags.)

Didn't you hear voices in the darkness?

SECOND SOLDIER. Sounded to me as if someone was calling to us.

(From the right comes CHANG-LING, *also escorted by* TWO SOLDIERS, *and with the cangue round his neck.)*

THIRD SOLDIER. Forward, you triple scoundrel, you revolutionary. You'll be made to smart for it.

FOURTH SOLDIER. To wish evil against the Powers of the State—that includes us.

THIRD SOLDIER. Cursed the Sacred Person of His Majesty, he did, and in the Hall of Justice too.

FOURTH SOLDIER. Wanted to stick into his breast that knife of his, with the sign of the white lotus on the hilt.

CHANG-LING. All my days I must go alone, without the companionship of wife, or child, or dog. Men stand to right and left of me clutching at me with menacing hands. They are like heavy grey walls all about me, ready to close upon me and crush me. They form a long gloomy lane down which I stagger, whipped forward by their hostile thoughts. They close behind me a blank wall of iron, and no sound pierces my loneliness but the mournful echo of my own unsteady steps. Oh, heavy time! Why did I come to the one land of all the world where justice is only for the rich, and the poor are a plaything for their lordly pleasures? In this land good is evil, and evil good. The bull-frog puffs itself out and tries to fly. The butterfly falls into the lake and is

drowned. Men sink to the ground from hunger and are trodden underfoot. The rich grow fat upon the labour of the poor, and deride their tears. Here, every man speaks a different language. The father cannot understand the son, nor the son his father. Love—love is a meaningless word, fallen out of use. It is blown away as quickly as the footprints of crows in the snow. The husband grins as he thrashes his wife; the woman smiles as she betrays her husband. Children fling stones at old people. The blind beggar at the temple gate is a laughing-stock to them. When there is war, they whine for peace; when there is peace, they attack one another with knives. Each is the destroyer of his fellow. Men hate their own countrymen more bitterly than the enemy beyond their borders. When the enemy is mighty their arms are like osier-rods against a forest of spears. Then they turn and glut their lust for blood on the defenceless bodies of their own people. They strike their own brother dead, if he has no arms to defend himself, or they shoot poisoned darts at him out of ambush. In the professorial chairs of the schools of learning sit asses by dozens. They put on lions' skins and preach war. The ass against lions, the hare against foxes! . . . The Emperor sits in Peking on his throne of lapis. His eyes are closed like the eyes of the god Fo. He looks inward and meditates. Oh, that I could plunge that knife of mine into the paunch of God himself!

THIRD SOLDIER. He blasphemes against God and his Sacred Majesty. Now wait, my lad. A thousand strokes of the bamboo for you before your execution are as certain as an amen after a prayer.

HI-TANG. *(Crying out.)* Brother!

CHANG-LING. My sister!

FIRST SOLDIER. Comrade, we are all going the same way to Peking. If you agree, let us tie these evil-doers together by the pigtails. Then we can beat them forward more easily.

THIRD SOLDIER. Let us do so.

(A cock crows.)

It has stopped snowing. There must be an inn somewhere near here. A little hot wine would do our numbed limbs good. It was a bitter cold night.

(Beats upon the door of the inn, which is suddenly lit up by the first glow of morning.)

Ho, there! Get up!

INNKEEPER *(from within.)* Coming, my lords, coming!

(There is a rattling of keys; a trumpet sounds far off.)

FIRST SOLDIER. That is the trumpet-call of his Excellency, the chief judge Chu-chu. He too is on his way to Peking.

*(*RUNNERS, *followed by* CHU-CHU, *borne in a litter or sedan-chair. The* SOLDIERS *and the* INNKEEPER *kow-tow. In a second chair,* CHOW. *In a third, Yu-pi, now* MRS. CHOW, *with the child. As* HI-TANG *sees the child, she darts forward to the chair, pulling* CHANG-LING *with her.)*

SECOND SOLDIER. Back with you, baggage. Do you want to disturb these noble people?

HI-TANG. My boy, Li! Do you know me? Do you know your mother?

(The procession of chairs passes like a shadow show.)

FIRST SOLDIER. Innkeeper, quick! Get a glass of hot wine for each of us. And then after them. By mid-day we must be in Peking.

INNKEEPER. Immediately, sir! Hot water is on already. Are the honourable criminals to have a mouthful also?

THIRD SOLDIER. If they have the money to pay for it, I've no objection.

CHANG-LING *(collapses.)*. I have no money. But I am dying of cold and thirst.

HI-TANG. Noble innkeeper, I have no money, but take from me this little over-mantle. I entreat you, take it in payment for a glass of wine. Drink, brother, drink. That will awaken life in you again.

CHANG-LING. They say that blessed spirits sometimes stoop from the stars to earth. Hi-tang, are you human?

SOLDIERS. Forward now, to the Emperor!

HI-TANG. Sun, I have lost my shadow. Sun, red petals in the snow, when you shine at evening, strew faded petals on the grave of a brother and a sister.

(All go out.)

(Immediately afterwards appear the LANDLORD *of the inn with a paper lantern.)*

INNKEEPER *(calling after them.)* Mr. Officer, Mr. Officer, you have forgotten to pay!

SOLDIERS *(off.)* Come here if you want payment—twenty-five strokes with a stick for each glass of wine.

INNKEEPER.

Here, a poor man, do I stand,
Robbed by this unlawful band.
Who carries a weapon in his hand,
Does what he will through all the land.

Never was such a fearful time,
Goodness is folly, murder no crime;
Deep in the dust is honour hurled.
Where is Justice in the world?

*(*HE *blows out his lantern. The sun stands like a red ball over the snow-covered landscape.)*

CURTAIN

第四折

ACT V

SCENE: *The first part of the Scene is played before a Curtain, which later opens and reveals the Throne Room of the Imperial Palace in Peking.*

EMPEROR. *(The former* PRINCE PO.) Recite to me, O Brother Poet, your verses, the verses that have come to you to-day betwixt dream and waking. I will have them inscribed in silver upon black.

POET. Impromptu of the Emperor for a distant beloved—write, Brother Emperor—

A flower,
A woman,
Enshrined for me, the Emperor, in a smile,
An eternal smile, unfading since I saw you.
The seasons fly above you
On hunting horses,
You remain unchanging,
True to yourself.
On the north side of the terrace
You lean down, with your virgin breasts over the flowery courtyard,
A flower between your lips.

EMPEROR. *(After a pause.)* You speak out of my

own heart, Li. Do you know the woman of whom I think so often?

POET. I know her not, yet she must be worthy of you.

EMPEROR. She was a tea-house girl in Nanking. It is just a year ago. Then, the old Emperor was still alive, and fortune had not yet chosen me for Emperor among fifty imperial princes. I had an evening to waste, as I have wasted so many of my empty evenings and nights with a girl and a glass of rice-spirit, song and dance in a tea-house. I entered the first good house in my way. Its sign was a white bird on a black ground. And what a beautiful white bird I found in the cage within.

POET. You twittered together in a part song—

EMPEROR. Until a hawk swooped down from the clouds and robbed me of my little white bird.

POET. You pursued this robber of your happiness?

EMPEROR. I had no right to do that.

POET. Does a lover ask after might and right?

EMPEROR. Perhaps I loved too little?

POET. He who loves, sticks not at theft and murder.

EMPEROR. Justice—that is the Emperor's highest law, and the virtue of virtues. For that cause have I ordered all criminals who since my accession have

been condemned to death, and all the judges who condemned them, to appear before my judgment seat to-day. I have concluded peace with our enemies, the Tartars. I will have no more blood uselessly shed for the possession of a barren unprofitable province in the Desert of Gobi. Now I will take the field against our foes at home. The foe at home is above all—a corrupt bureaucracy. Unjust judges there are whose souls are so covetous and besotted that they sell justice like a fish in the market place. I will help the oppressed among my people. I will be their brother, not their judge. But my very shadow will soon be sufficient to strike terror into the hearts of evil-doers. The lilies of my escutcheon for the good, the sword therein for the rogues. On the table of stone on which the laws are written, I have had this sign inscribed—"In the Name of God." And whoever sees this sign, let him be filled with a holy awe, for through my mouth the God speaks.

(A MASTER OF CEREMONIES *enters.)*

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. I beg most humbly to inform your Majesty that it is time to dress for the function.

EMPEROR. I am coming. Come with me, Li. Set the imperial circlet on my head. From whose hands but yours should I prefer to take it? I hope that our friendship will endure always, and that you will never leave me. I will appoint you a member of the

Imperial Academy of Learning and the Arts, and Inspector of the Records, and Keeper of the State Archives. You shall set down in writing all the curious and outstanding events of my reign, as a monument for posterity. May heaven grant that only happy events may need to be recorded!

POET. I thank you: as man, as friend, as Emperor.

(All three go out.)

(Enter CHU-CHU, CHOW *and* MRS. MA, *now* MRS. CHOW, *with the child in her arms.)*

CHOW. Why do you come with me always? Your presence here is completely out of place, not to say superfluous.

MRS. MA. Scarcely are we married than you throw off your mask of attachment and devoted love. You grudge me every pleasure. It is nothing to you whether I see the Emperor or not. I burn to behold the Son of Heaven.

CHOW. He will shortly, no doubt, burn for you.

MRS. MA. Is it true that after a while the crown grows fixed to his head? That his hair becomes pure silver, and his finger-nails mother of pearl? Is it true that a single glance can kill when he wills? That his

eyes are blue sapphires, and that when he ascended the throne all that was human in him was put away?

CHOW. Don't talk nonsense, ignorant, credulous goose, and keep quiet in the background.

CHU. I must say that I am not very comfortable when I think that the eyes of the Emperor will gaze upon me. He is a young and energetic lord and, like all young people, he wants to reform something. From the old Emperor people like me had nothing to fear. He was so old that he couldn't keep his eyes open unaided. At an audience little ivory rods had to be placed between the lids. Before his eyes, one could maintain anything one wished; they detected nothing. But this new lord—I feel a slight dizziness in my head.

CHOW. If you do not know how to control yourself you may easily lose it.

CHU. What? The dizziness? I hope so.

CHOW. No. The head?

CHU. Let me tell you that my head sits as firmly on my shoulders as yours does.

(They go to the side. The back of the Stage opens, disclosing the Throne Room. In the background, the Emperor's Throne. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES *blows a trumpet. All fall*

to the ground and kowtow. The EMPEROR, *in robes of state, moves slowly forward towards the throne, and lowers himself into it.)*

EMPEROR. When, by the grace of the gods, I was raised to the throne, I sent my couriers into the provinces, that, in the exercise of my office, I might unfold here the banner of justice—the golden standard with the dragon. My will is that both judge and judged should appear before my throne to give an account of themselves and of their doings. I am as inaccessible to flattery as to slander. Therefore I judge the judges also. If any man has complaints against them, let him come forward. This yellow room has a thousand eyes to see through all pretence, and a thousand hands to wield the sword of justice. Here on the steps of my throne is painted Ti-ching: Speak quietly, touch lightly, think calmly. Let each man take counsel with himself. In my park the trees stand bare of leaves. Yet shall they bear strange fruit, criminals, false witnesses, unrighteous judges.

(To CHANG-LING.).

You there, bound to that woman by your pigtail—soldiers undo the pigtails—Tell me why you are in custody, and what is your crime. What! do you remain standing in my presence, and do not kneel?

CHANG-LING. If there were any justice in this land,

I would not stand thus in fetters before you. He who has suffered as much as I have, need kneel to no man.

EMPEROR. You use no ceremony with me.

CHANG-LING. I stand before death—before you. And must I burden my mind with ceremonies? Kneel and call you Lord and Majesty? But if it flatters your ear that I, a man of the lowest caste and abandoned character, should call you Majesty and bow to you, good, so be it! I bow before the Majesty of Death.

EMPEROR. Where is the judge?

*(*CHU *kowtows.)*

And what is this man's crime?

CHU. He reviled the Son of Heaven, your Sacred Majesty. No punishment is too great for him. Let him be cut into a hundred and twenty pieces, and let his head be displayed upon the wall of the palace as a scarecrow, and as a warning to subjects to keep their tongues in check.

CHANG-LING. The gorged voice stinks of falsehood. His lips drip oil and lies.

EMPEROR. He reviled our Majesty—with what words?

CHU. The filthiness of his speech besmirched the High Court Chamber of Chu-kong.

EMPEROR. The words—

CHU. I offer a thousand apologies—I scarcely dare to pronounce them; my very teeth refuse to let them pass—he said that the new Emperor would be no better than the old.

EMPEROR. Did he say that?

CHANG-LING. And this as well: that under his banner we poor shall perish in the streets as formerly. For only he has justice who has power, position, gold, the possibility of corrupting the judge with coin, or with a pretty woman—his own wife maybe—who cares? The Emperor sits in Peking on his throne. Peking is far away, and the Emperor is besieged with the cares of state. Justice! Is there justice in China? Lest I should laugh—*(He weeps.)*

CHU. He is a revolutionary. A member of the League of the White Lotus.

EMPEROR. You weep. Do you weep for your fate?

CHANG-LING. I weep for China.

EMPEROR. Take the cangue from his neck! He shall be free. No criminal could weep such tears. They cleanse the flower of his heart like dew. That he reviled me, I forgive him. He reviled me out of a noble desire to better the bad world. The same high zeal is mine. Come, be my friend, and help me to tread my thorny way with courage.

CHANG-LING. You are in truth the Son of Heaven. I kiss the hem of your starry mantle.

EMPEROR. I have here a report from—*(shuffling the documents)* the Judge of Chu-kong. It concerns a woman of the second grade named Chang-Hi-tang—

*(*HI-TANG *raises her eyes for the first time. The* EMPEROR *and* HI-TANG *recognize one another.)*

This lady is alleged to have murdered her husband and seized upon the child of the first wife in order to claim the inheritance.

CHU. That is so.

EMPEROR. Crimes of this kind fall into the tenth category—those which are punished with death—

*(*HI-TANG *sinks to her knees.)*

EMPEROR. Chang-Hi-tang, is it true that you poisoned your husband, and stole the child belonging to the first wife, in order to obtain a rich inheritance?

*(*HI-TANG *is silent.)*

CHOW. Your Majesty is a mirror, which blinds her.

CHU. Your Majesty is a sun, blinding us all.

EMPEROR. Chang-Hi-tang, what profession did you follow before you were married to Mr. Ma?

HI-TANG.

'Mid willows stands the house upon the shore,
A pretty maid is peeping through the door.
Before the cage there stands a mandarin,
A pretty linnet hops and sings within.
Shut doors, and guard the cage well night and day,
Else flies the linnet to the woods away!

EMPEROR. You were a flower-maiden?

Who were the visitors to the house among the willows?

(HI-TANG *nods.*)

HI-TANG. Mr. Ma took me out of the house on the first day I entered it.

EMPEROR. Had no one visited you before he came?

HI-TANG. A young lord visited me.

EMPEROR. Who was the young lord?

HI-TANG. If I should name his name he would believe that I wanted to lighten my fortune, to flatter him, to beg an alleviation of my pain, to ask for grace rather than for my right. I will not name his name. I ask for justice, nothing else.

EMPEROR. And love, would you not ask for love, when you yourself love?

HI-TANG. I love my child.

EMPEROR. The sworn testimonies of the witness

in this case declare that the child to which you make claim is not your child.

*(*HI-TANG *is silent.)*

CHANG-LING. The witnesses say so falsely. They were bribed by the first wife.

MRS. MA. He lies.

EMPEROR. It is the function of the judge to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

CHANG-LING. The judge was corrupted like the witnesses.

CHU. He lies.

EMPEROR. The first wife of the Mandarin Ma is in the room—which is she?

(MRS. MA *comes forward and kowtows.)*

Woman, speak. Who is the mother of the child you carry in your arms?

MRS. MA. I am, your Majesty—

EMPEROR. Good!—Master of Ceremonies—

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Your Majesty.

EMPEROR. Take a piece of chalk, draw a circle here on the floor in front of my throne, and place the boy within it.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. It is performed.

EMPEROR. And now you two women, try to pull

the boy out of the circle, both at the same time. One grasp him by the left arm, the other by the right. The true mother is she that has strength to pull the boy out of the circle.

(The women do as they are bid. HI-TANG *grasps the boy tenderly.* MRS. MA *pulls him brutally towards her.)*

EMPEROR. It is plain to the eye that she *(pointing to* HI-TANG*)* cannot be the mother. Yet she may succeed yet in pulling the child out of the circle.

*(*MRS. MA *pulls the boy towards her.)*

Hi-tang, I see that you are not making the least effort to pull the child out of the circle. What does this mean?

HI-TANG. I fear your Majesty's anger. You glower upon me like a wolf or a tiger, ready to devour me if I do not obey you. But I cannot do it. I bore this child under my heart for nine months. Nine months have I lived with him, nine months longer than other people. I have known all sweetness with him, and all bitterness without him. When it was cold I warmed his tiny limbs. His joints are so tender and brittle that I should break them if I pulled to my side as hard as that woman pulls to hers. The arms of a child are as tender and brittle as stems of straw or hemp. If the child can only be won by pulling out his arm, only she can pull him out of the circle

who has never felt the pains of a mother for her child.

EMPEROR. *(Standing up.)*. Hear then the judgment of the circle of chalk. That woman *(pointing to* MRS. MA*)* strove to possess herself of the wealth of Mr. Ma, and to that end, stole the child. Now that the true mother is found, the true murderer will be found also. I read in the accusation the wording of the oath which Mrs. Ma spoke. Mrs. Ma repeat the oath.

MRS. MA. I—swear—by—the—bones *(stumbling)* that she who is not the mother of the child—poisoned Mr. Ma.

EMPEROR. You swear the terrible oath that you yourself are the murderer of Mr. Ma—

MRS. MA. It—is—so—

EMPEROR. So you acknowledge yourself guilty of your husband's death?

MRS. MA. I acknowledge—myself—guilty.

EMPEROR. Bind the delinquent. Put the cangue upon her.

MRS. MA. It was he who incited me to it, my lover—*(pointing to* CHOW.*)*

CHOW. *(*WHINING.*)* I incited you? I your lover? Lord of Heaven, hear this lying, filthy-mouthed creature. Is not her face a single mass of

paint, and under the paint do not the wrinkles run as deep as furrows in an Autumn field?

MRS. MA. And yet you would once on my account have taken your dirty life. You told me once that I was as enchanting as Kwanyin.

CHOW. As Kwanyin! That's long ago. And it was I incited you? Who procured false witness—the midwife, the two coolies? Who was as greedy as a magpie for Mr. Ma's goods? I am only a poor, humble official. Where should I have found the money to corrupt his never-satisfied Excellency Chu, chief judge of Chu-kong, with a hundred taels?

CHU. I allowed myself to be corrupted, I the most incorruptible judge in the whole district?

CHOW. Did I not bring your Excellency the purse of gold with my own hand—you greedy, grasping tiger?

EMPEROR. Enough of these unworthy disputes and quarrels. You will only entangle yourselves together in your guilt, like rats in a net. Bind their pigtails together. And you, Hi-tang, who have suffered such bitter wrong, the purest heart that this earth bears, slandered and judged without cause or right—see! I come down from the seat of judgment and leave the rod of justice in your own righteous hand. Speak you the judgment on these three from your own clear heart, that like a limpid well reflects the heavens only.

HI-TANG. *(From the throne, turning first to Chu.)* I hold the rod of justice over you, and break it because I will not judge. Justice is not for man to exercise, for he who thinks unjustly, does unjustly. These have allowed themselves to be corrupted, but I was swayed once by a youth's love. Hence comes injustice. Did I not pass false judgment upon Ma? The second of these loved; his crime was love. Have not all men fallen through the same cause? The third—that she stole my child from me—I forgive her, willingly, but that she killed my husband—that is indeed dreadful, and a desire for vengeance stirs in my heart.

EMPEROR. You hold what these three committed as nothing?

HI-TANG. I do not know how a judge dares to give judgment, for the gods themselves speak through his mouth. Chu and Chow are unworthy of their office and must lose it. Otherwise they are free to go where they will. Mrs. Ma also shall be free, although I cannot forgive her for putting poison in Mr. Ma's tea. Go. Make yourself tea—I leave you to your conscience.

*(*CHOW, CHU *and* MRS. MA *go out.)*

Chang-ling, my brother!

EMPEROR. I appoint him to the judgment seat of Chu-kong, vacant through the dismissal of Mr. Chu.

CHANG-LING. Live long. The white petals of the lotus flower shine always over you!

EXIT.

(The side-curtains fall. The last scene is played, like the first part of the Fifth Act, in front.)

HI-TANG. My child, my child! My little panther's head, my little lynx, my little downy chicken, my little apricot, my little peach. The tiny cap you wear, I worked it myself with figures of the eight good spirits and the God of Long Life. Your frock is dark-red, your little jacket is green; you have mottled socks like a cock or a pheasant. Your little shoes gape wide like a tiger's throat. How they snap at me, the wicked tiger shoes! How sweet you smell when I kiss you! You have got a pretty name too. You are called Li. That means light. Light of my life, light of my night. Dragon-seed, phœnix-son! The lord of the south and the north pole-stars grant you a long life of nine-and-ninety years! You will one day shine in bright glory. The sun, ashamed, will creep away to hide, and the moon, for jealousy, will gash herself with her golden hook. But you will shine for ever on the summit of the clouds. I am so glad and happy over you! I thank the Author of All Things that he created me, my elders that they reared me, the earth that it nourished me.

The secret truth love made to appear,
The darkness was through love made clear.
Love confounds the lying tongue,
Love is triumphant over wrong,
Love is like the sun in heaven,
Love is the calm that falls at even,
Love will cheat death of his prey,
And never, never pass away.

EMPEROR. Hi-tang—

HI-TANG. My noble friend—

EMPEROR. Yet another word before I leave you.

HI-TANG. Leave me? Forsake me so soon?

EMPEROR. That night when Ma bought you in Tong's house, do you remember me?

HI-TANG. How could I forget the night when I saw you first?

EMPEROR. Tell me what happened that night in Ma's house.

HI-TANG. I was brought to a room on the ground floor, with sliding doors leading into the garden. I wept and prayed for quiet. Mr. Ma left me alone. I went out on the terrace. The moon was shining. I could smell the flowers. A deer leaped in the park. It was so warm that I left the door into the garden opened. Then I lay down and had a wonderful dream—

EMPEROR. What did you dream?

HI-TANG. I dreamed I lay in the room with Ma, as in fact I did, and there came a young lord creeping stealthily through the park, as a panther creeps. He entered my room, reached the bed on which I lay, lay beside me, loved me and embraced as a man his wife.

EMPEROR. How comes it that you remember this dream so clearly?

HI-TANG. Oh, my dear lord, it was of you I dreamed, and that you came to me. And, if I remember rightly, in that dream you plucked the fresh flower of my garden.

EMPEROR. All this you dreamed?

HI-TANG. I dreamed it only.

EMPEROR. Hi-tang, what you dreamed, happened in truth. I followed you that night, hid in a bamboo-thicket, slid into the sleeping chamber, and there your beauty so dazzled and bewitched me, that I could not withstand my desire and longing for you. I loved you, sleeping, and, as you thought, only in sleep. Can you forgive me for what I did, through too great love for you?

HI-TANG. I will forgive you, if you will take the child for yours, for yours it must be. The storm begot him, the wind bore him, his godfather was the yellow moonshine.

EMPEROR. To-day you shall be proclaimed to the people as my wife.

HI-TANG. *(Throws the child up in her arms.)*

Child of the sun, and moon, and polar-star,
The sweetest babe of all the babes that are,
My share of sorrow was enough for two,
May the just gods give only bliss to you!
For you the bells of joy shall ring aloud,
And eager pleasures round your cradle crowd.
Only be just! that when your days are past,
Fate's chalky circle shine complete at last.

CURTAIN.

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第五折

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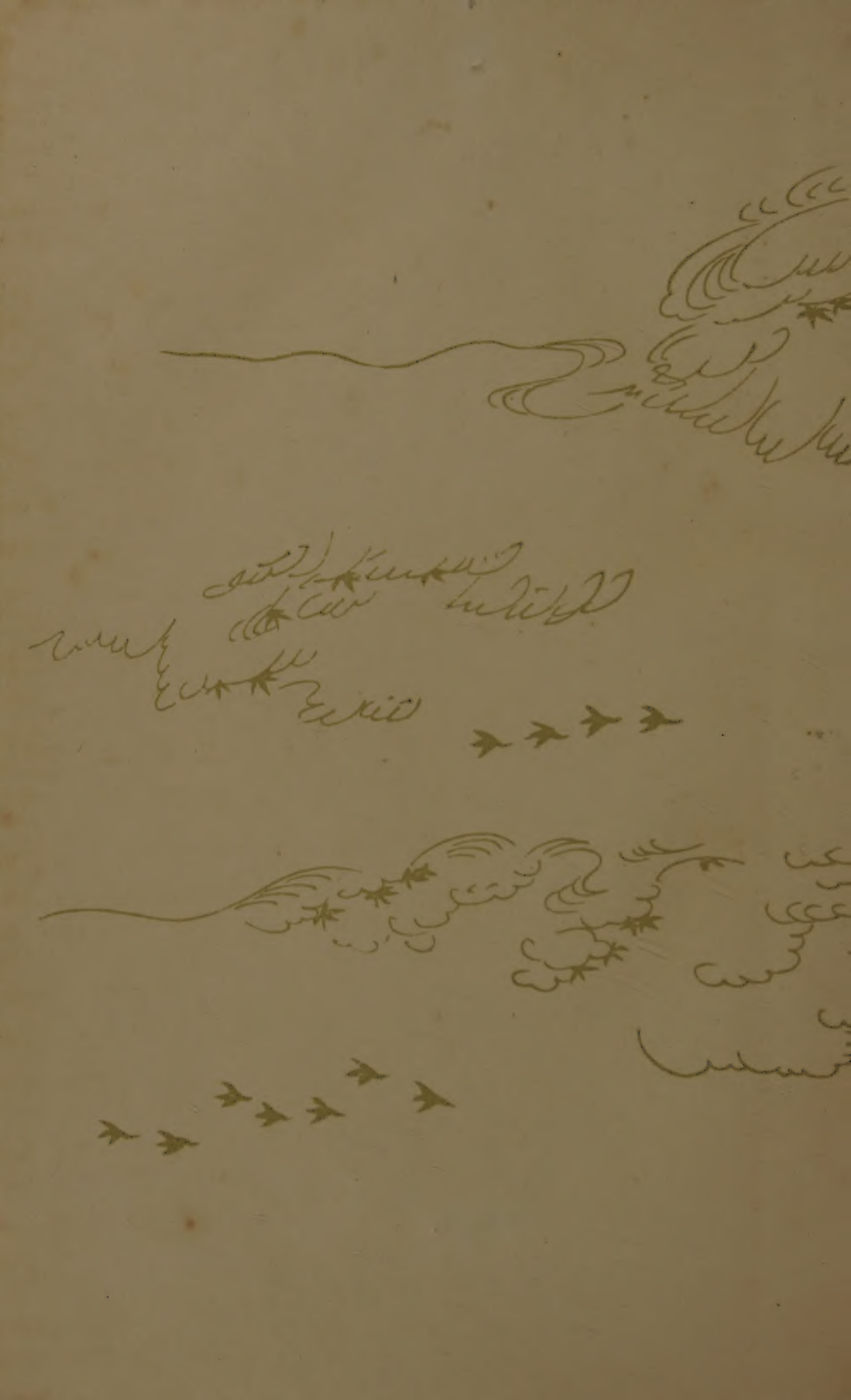
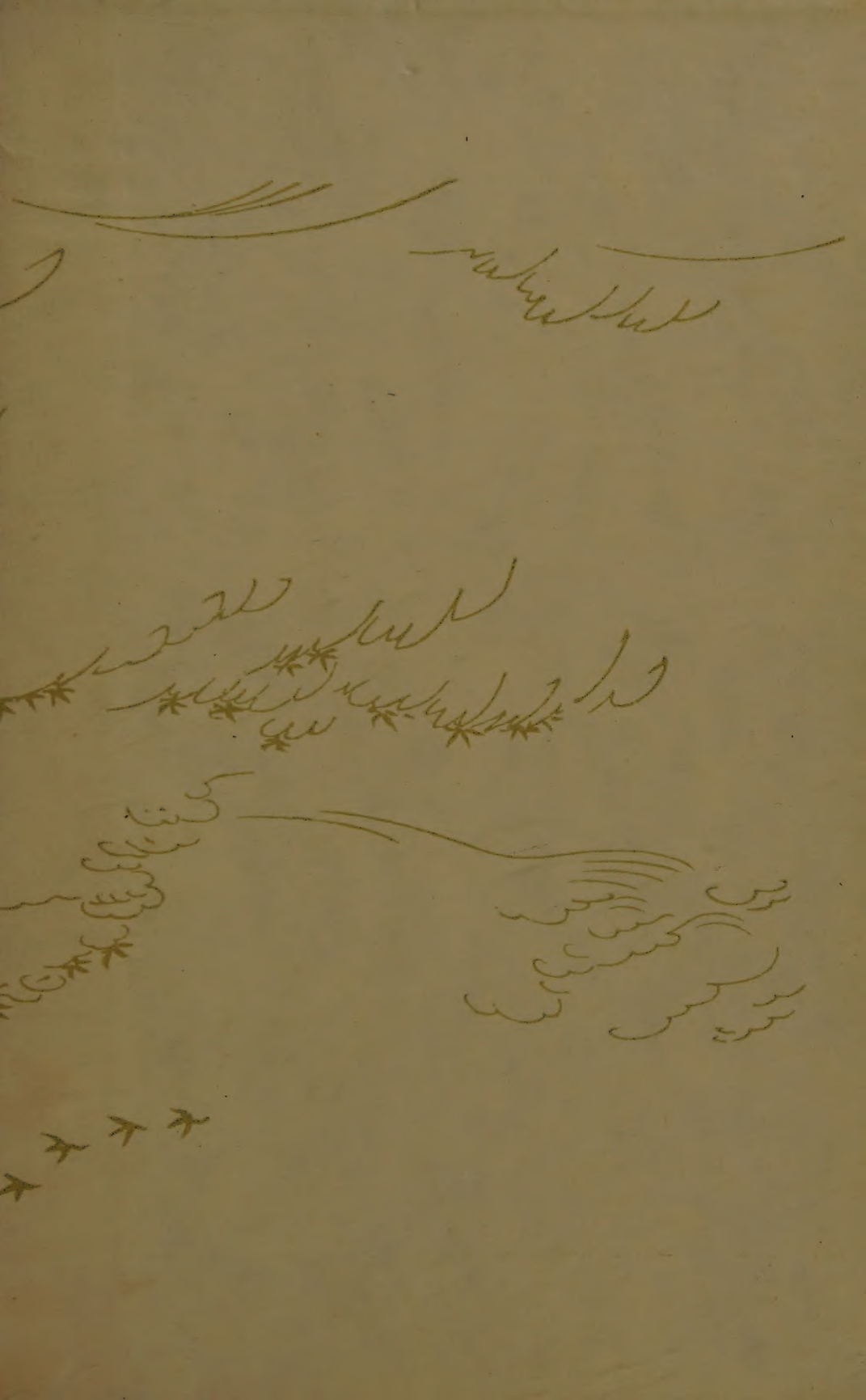
Kingswood Surrey





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